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MEDITATIONS
ON THE
23RD & 84TH PSALMS



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MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATIONS
ON THE
TWENTY-THIRD
AND
EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALMS.

BY
ANDREW MILLER.



"The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."—*John* x. 11.
"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."—*Ps.* cxxii. 1.

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PREFACE.

VERY little needs to be said by way of preface. The "MEDITATIONS" are well known. Their reappearance in a separate volume, is to meet the expressed wish of many friends.

Besides, when lying scattered in short meditations amongst other papers, as in "Things New and Old," they are less readable. Indeed, the difficulty in reading them connectedly, even when there is a willing mind, is so great, that comparatively few will take the trouble. But they are so convenient in the present form, and so different to the reader when thus together, that it is almost like a new book.

The circumstances under which the greater part of the Meditations on the TWENTY-THIRD PSALM were written, and of which they may be said to be the MEMORIAL, give them a special interest to some. But that circle is narrowing. Many who *loved* and *were loved*, have gone to the Lord since JULY 1ST, 1864. The earth is becoming poorer, but heaven grows richer. *They* have gone before, *we* are following after. "A LITTLE WHILE," expresses the period of our separation.

The main object of these Meditations, I may here say, is to lead both writer and reader to greater nearness in heart to God. There is no piety so deep or real as the reference of the heart to God in everything, and all day long. This is living in God's presence—beneath the glance of His eye. "I will guide thee with mine eye," is the promise. Wondrous truth!—a child of God on earth, taught to read his Father's eye in heaven! This indeed is nearness—guidance—fellowship—fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, through the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit. Ps. xxxii.; 1 John i. 3.

When our souls are in this state, we walk in the light as God is in the light. We are happy to have everything that concerns us looked at there. Christ is revealed to the soul in His fulness and glory, by the Holy Spirit. Our joy is full. Difficulties vanish. Clouds and darkness disappear before His brightness. Our love to Him rises to the measure of our enjoyment of His love to us: we can never rise higher than what we see in Him, whether it be love, self-denial, or service. Hence the practical importance of these words, "*Looking unto Jesus.*"

There may be troubles on every side, as to the circumstances through which we are passing, but amidst them all the heart is calm, peaceful, and quietly referring all to God. Faith looks *only* to Him; it trusts *only* in Him; "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Ps. xxv.; lxii.

Fain would I lead my many dear young friends thus to walk with the Lord. If one we love be far away, we not only *think* of that one, but we instinctively refer all that interests us to the absent one. Before we are aware, we find ourselves wondering what *he* would think of this—what *he* would say to that. This is natural—it is the communion of hearts that love; distance cannot hinder it. Thus should it be with the child of God and his Father—with the disciple and his Lord.

In faithfulness and love would I say, in conclusion—make Christianity the one great business of your lives, and make all other things bend to it. It is worthy of the entire consecration of heart and life. There can be no solid peace, no lasting happiness, no steadfastness of course, without this. When other things share the heart with Christ, all goes wrong spiritually. The conscience becomes uneasy, the heart becomes unhappy, and feebleness in Divine things soon follows.

May the Lord keep us all very near to Himself and ever walking in the light of His countenance; and may He bless to many, many souls, the following Meditations, and His name shall have all the glory.

A. M.

London.

The soul is the dwelling-place of the truth of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and the avenue; the soul is its home or dwelling-place.

The *beauty* and the *joy* of the truth may have unduly occupied the outposts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates—but it is only in the soul that its *reality* can be known. And it is by MEDITATION that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling-place.

J. G. B.

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM is familiar to many. To some, it recalls the earliest associations of youth, and even of childhood. Scenes, voices, faces, long, long passed away, and never more to be seen or heard in this world, are vividly brought before the mind, in meditating on this beautiful Psalm. The heart, at times, loves to recall, and dwell on, such early associations. And, not unfrequently, in mature years, and even in old age, the lessons learnt in youth are the best remembered. Hence, the importance of early training and instruction in the things of God, and of the immortal soul.

The following anecdote from the pen of a missionary who laboured in India, touchingly illustrates what has just been referred to; but, as it is now given from memory, we can only vouch for its being *substantially* correct. In visiting an hospital, he came to the bedside of a dying soldier, and spoke to him about the concerns of his soul, but he gave no heed to what was said. He was, evidently, dying fast, but utterly careless and hardened, through a long course of sin. The earnest missionary could not bear the

thought of leaving him to die in his sins, knowing what an eternity of misery his must be, were this to be the case ; yet every appeal seemed ineffectual. At last the thought crossed his mind—"I can hear from his accent that he comes from a country where the Psalms of David are generally committed to memory in youth. I will try if a verse of a Psalm will touch his heart." So when he had gained his attention, he calmly repeated to him,

" 'Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear ;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear.
For He remembers we are dust,
And He our frame well knows.
Frail man, his days are like the grass,
As flower in field he grows.' "

The dying soldier now looked at the missionary earnestly ; he stared as if a voice from afar addressed him. The scenes of home and youth rushed into his mind—a tender chord had been touched. The well-known, though long-forgotten lines of the beautiful hundred and third Psalm, thrilled his soul, and were, we trust, the voice of God in his conscience. He was thoroughly broken down, so that a thousand avenues, we doubt not, might now have been found to his heart.

We are willing to believe that, in such a case, we see the happy fruits of the early instruction of the child, and of the parent's prayer to God for His blessing. For a long time, both the instruction given, and the prayers offered, seemed fruitless and

forgotten. But God can never forget. The child may, and alas, often does, but our God, blessed be His name, never can. The prayer that has been laid in faith on His table, can never be overlaid. It may often seem so, and our evil hearts of unbelief are too prone to fear that it is so ; but faith *affirms* that it never can be overlooked, or unanswered. The prayer that has been thus spread out before Him, is ever beneath His eye. He has a father's heart, He knows what it is to bring up children ; as we read in Isaiah i. 2 : "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." He knows every feeling that exercises a parent's heart. And the good seed of the word, too, may often seem to have been banished from the mind, and the heart and conscience become so encrusted by the world and sin, that to pierce through it is impossible. But God is faithful, and faith will never yield its hold of Him. It can ever fall back on that broad and blessed word, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And, again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" Rom. viii. 32 ; Acts xvi. 31.

By means the most simple, and at a moment when we least expect it, our gracious God often works in the hearts of those we love. And when the light of God does shine into the soul, a long life of sin, with its dreadful realities, may start up before the trembling sinner in a moment ; and, in another moment, by the grace of God, he may see them all blotted out, and his peace made with Him, through the precious

blood of Jesus. When God works, who, what, can hinder Him?

Could we conceive of a case more hopeless than the one just described? The Philippian jailer, or the thief on the cross, were not more so. Far from home—no relatives near, and, it may be, without a friend in this world. And now, laid down to die in an hospital at the close of such a life; is he not, we may exclaim, beyond all hope? Who thinks of him now? Who cares for him there? Only ONE. He who had often heard, it may be, the parents' frequent, fervent prayer—"O Father of Mercies, keep thine eye on my wandering son; let Thy hand of unwearied love be spread over him night and day; O bring him early to Thyself, that he may not so dishonour Thy name,")—now graciously vouchsafes an answer in peace. The parents may have passed off the scene, and prayer may have long been silent for the careless one; but God forgets not the heart that trusted Him, and, in due time, will surely fulfil its desires. He sent His servant at the right time—gave him the right word—and all in good time accomplished the blessed work! Glad surprise will often fill our souls in heaven, in meeting those we once feared might never reach that happy land. Oh that we may count only on God, and never doubt or fear!

Knowing that many hearts are deeply interested in this subject, must be our excuse for saying so much thereon. But we now return to our beautiful Psalm; and it may be we shall find, that however early we were taught to repeat, "The Lord's my

shepherd," we have yet to learn its meaning and application.

"THE LORD *is my shepherd; I shall not want.*" This is surely the expression of a heart that is filled and occupied with the Lord Himself. It may be the expression of one who only knew the Lord as *Jehovah*, revealed to Israel; or, of one who knows Him as *Jehovah Jesus*, who saves His people from their sins; but it is evidently the language of one who is truly godly, whether Jew or Christian, and who makes the Lord his only trust. The soul, under all circumstances, is here viewed, as resting on the unfailing care, and quietly enjoying the varied resources, of the well-known Shepherd of the sheep. And that, not only for the present time, but for all times, and for ever.

This is precious faith! Mark it well, O my soul, and patiently meditate thereon. It is most practical; "The Lord is my shepherd." It rises, observe, above what He gives, what He does, what He promises, blessed as these are, and calmly rests on what He is Himself. As the eye of Abraham rested not on the promises, when he put forth his hand to slay his son, but on Him from whom the promises came; so here, the eye of the pilgrim, resting on the Lord, he can say, "I shall not want." When such confidence fills the heart, peace, evenness, and quietness, will characterize the life.

But knowest thou, my soul, the secret spring of such a blessed state? How is it that so few rise to this measure? Hast thou? Hast thou this rejoicing and confidence in the Lord, in the midst of wilder-

ness circumstances? "The Lord is my shepherd," sounds like the voice of one *rejoicing*. "I shall not want," like that of *quiet confidence*.

When we have learnt the deep lessons of the twenty-second Psalm, we shall understand the path of the twenty-third; and further, we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of the twenty-fourth. The three Psalms are linked together. But the twenty-second must be learnt first. To know the grace that shines on the pilgrim's path, in the twenty-third, and on the pilgrim resting in glory, in the twenty-fourth, we must know the grace that shines in the sufferings of Christ, in the twenty-second. The grace and the glory are *due* to Him who suffered there, and to all who own Him, in the day of His rejection. We must travel, in faith, through the twenty-second, to reach the twenty-third; there is no other path to it; and, when there, we find that the next thing is glory. The Christian is thus, in spirit, between the sufferings and the glory—the cross and the crown. He looks back on the one, and onward to the other. Sin, death, judgment, the grave, the world, Satan, are all behind him. *Victory* over every foe, is stamped on our life in resurrection.

The three grand aspects of the Lord's Shepherd-character, as revealed in the New Testament, teach the same precious truths. 1. As the "Good Shepherd," who laid down His life for the sheep. Comp. John x., Psalm xxii. 2. As the "Great Shepherd,"—risen from the dead, He takes charge of the sheep as they journey through "that great and terrible wilderness." Comp. Heb. xiii.; Psalm xxiii. 3. As

the "Chief Shepherd," who will give a crown of glory to all His under shepherds, at His appearing and kingdom. (Comp. 1 Pet. v. ; Psalm xxiv.) Surely, if we know the Lord thus, our confidence in Him must be without a question. We shall know His love, care, power, grace, and goodness, as the Shepherd of the sheep. And having gone through the wilderness Himself, He knows all the dangers and difficulties of the way.

The immediate occasion of the blessed Lord taking this place of care and responsibility, is also worthy of special note. In the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, He is rejected as the *light* and the *truth*. In the ninth, He is rejected in His *work*. Thus rejected by the Jews in His *Person* and *work*, He formally takes His place in the tenth chapter, outside the Jewish fold, as the "Good Shepherd." Now, He gathers "the poor of the flock" around Himself, as the new centre. "They shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one *flock* (*flock* it should be, not *fold*), and one shepherd." They are a "little flock" with Himself, outside the Jewish *fold*. They have been cast out of the synagogue, but they have *all blessing* in Him. Appearances may be against them, but His word assures them of a present salvation, and happy liberty. "I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." How unlike the narrow limits of Israel—the place of bondage ! Now they have the full assurance of salvation ; and, also, "can go in" to the sanctuary of God's holy presence to worship, and "out" in service to a perishing world. But this is

not.all: grace abounds; His heart overflows with deepest interest and tenderness for those who leave all and follow Him—who follow Him in His rejection; or, as the apostle expresses it, who “go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,”—sharing His rejection. For all such, that wonderful revelation of grace was especially given. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” These verses will be read with tenfold more interest when we understand the circumstances in which they were first uttered; and still more, if we are in similiar circumstances ourselves.

But it may be said by some, that as David, the writer of this Psalm, lived long before the humiliation and cross of Christ, he could know nothing of these things. True, so far; but he knew what it was to be rejected by man, and cast upon God, even after he was the Lord’s anointed. David and his companions in “the cave of Adullam,” typify Christ and those that gather around Him. But we doubt not that “the spirit of Christ,” in David, so guided him in writing the Psalm, that it applies to both Jew and Christian, and may be the truthful expression of the experience of both; only, in a much higher, and more spiritual way with us.

“The Jews’ religion” had its place and day before the cross; Christianity after it. This makes all the

difference. We know not Messiah after the flesh, but a risen Christ in heavenly glory. We are associated with Him there. Judaism was earthly in its character ; it had "divine service," and a "worldly sanctuary." Christianity is heavenly. Christians are seated together in heavenly places in Christ. Our place is to be *outside the camp* with Christ, as witnesses, and *inside the veil* with Him, as worshippers. And now, from this heavenly point of view, it is our happy privilege to meditate on the rich experience of this delightful Psalm, in the full light of gospel truth.

" My Shepherd is the Lamb,
The living Lord, who died ;
With all things good I ever am
By Him supplied.
He richly feeds my soul
With blessings from above ;
And leads me where the rivers roll
Of endless love."

Ver. 2. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters.*" The effect of the knowledge of Jesus as the *good* and *great* Shepherd, is rest of soul in Himself, and the quiet enjoyment of His love and grace. To know Himself is life—eternal life. To know His work is peace—perfect peace. "*He maketh me to lie down.*" To *sit* down is to rest ; but to *lie* down gives the idea of full, perfect, refreshing rest—complete repose. This is what the Shepherd provides—what He leads to ; not, alas, what we always accept. We often wander in fields wherein is no pasture, and beside the *troubled*, not the

quiet waters. But this comes from occupation with self and unbelief, not from the Shepherd's hand and care. He would have the feeblest of His flock to be free from all anxiety as to the future. The Shepherd's thoughtful love is enough. He has charged Himself with the entire care of all who follow Him. We have only to watch the direction of the Shepherd's eye, and confide in His unfailing care. "I will guide thee with mine eye"—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," are His own words. His sheep cannot want. They may often be greatly tried in their journeyings through the wilderness, and often be ready to faint and fail because of the way; but we must remember that the Lord's grace never fails; and that we must ever count on Him, and what we have in Him. He is with us always, even unto the end. We may quietly rest in Him. He maketh us to lie down in "*green pastures*"—in the midst of plenty—we rest in the abundance of His grace; and He ever leads beside the still waters.

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

Peace, plenty, and security, characterize the portion of the Lord's beloved flock. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

This beautiful passage, which so touchingly represents the Lord's delight in the sealed remnant of the Gentiles, will be *literally* true during the millennium, of all who are faithful to "the King of Glory." (Comp. Isa. xlix., with Rev. vii.). But it is also true now, in a spiritual sense, of every sheep and lamb in the highly-favoured flock of Christ. But knowest thou this blessed truth, O my soul, for thyself—is it thine own experience? It can only be *known* by the word of God, and *enjoyed* in the heart by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Our rest and plenty are not natural and worldly, but spiritual and heavenly.

When the heart is simple, all is plain and easy. We have heard the feeblest sing in the joyous sense of deliverance, and with amazing heart, even before the pangs of the new birth were well over ;

" He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay,
And on a rock He set my feet,
Establishing my way.
He put a new song in my mouth,
Our God to magnify :
Many shall see it, and shall fear,
And on the Lord rely."

Further on we learn, that the *measure* of our blessing is the Lord's own measure. "Because as he is, so are we in this world." "Whosoever drinketh of this water," pointing to Jacob's well, "shall thirst again. But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." The deepest well of human bliss may soon run dry, but the "living fountains of waters" have their spring in the heart

of God, which can never fail. And again, "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John iv., vi.) And further still, as the foreign shoot that is grafted into the olive-tree drinks of its richness and fatness; or, as the members of the body have nourishment ministered from the head; so are we vitally united to Christ, and we feed on Him, both as to our *heavenly* and our *time-condition*.

But in the passage before us, it is rather the Lamb feeding us, than we feeding on Him. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." Both are blessedly true; but the former agrees more fully with the strains of the twenty-third Psalm. He who laid down His life for the sheep, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, now feeds them and leads them with His own hand. What grace! What gentleness! To be protected and nourished, in our journey through the wilderness, by the very hand that was pierced for our sins, should fill our hearts with perfect confidence in our Shepherd, notwithstanding the manifold trials and difficulties of the way.

The great thing, undoubtedly, is to know Himself, and to know what we are to Him, and what He is to us. What has He done in the past, what is He doing in the present, and what will He do in the future, to manifest His love? May not His great work be all briefly summed up in this? When we had lost all—the soul, holiness, happiness, and God—He not only

brings the lost one back to God, but, oh, wondrous truth,—truth fraught with complete blessedness!—*He recovers God for the soul!* and this is *all*, for “God is love.” He is the living God, the only source of the soul’s life, holiness, and happiness. Oh! what a truth! Who can estimate its blessedness? Dwell upon it, O my soul; only think—*the soul recovered for God, and God recovered for the soul!* What a recovery! What a reconciliation! Not, observe, that God needed to be reconciled to us; no, God never was man’s enemy; on the contrary, He so loved us when we were in our sins, that He gave His Son to die for us. And it is plainly stated, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Nothing was needed to turn God’s heart to us, blessed be His name! But the cross was needed, that by it God might receive the atonement, and we the reconciliation. We, alas, were enemies to God in our minds by wicked works; but love triumphed in the cross; for thereby righteous reconciliation was accomplished, and man’s enmity to God was slain. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to* God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Pet. iii. 18.

And now, mark well, my soul, in thy meditations, this inviting aspect of God’s love towards us; it is well fitted to quiet many a fear, and comfort thee in any trouble—to fill thee, even now, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And mark, too, that word of exquisite tenderness which refers to the wind-up of

thy weary journey through this vale of tears ; " And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." With His own hand He wipes away the last tear that shall ever dim the pilgrim's eye. May we not call this the privilege of love, which the Father claims for all the children ?

Ver. 3. "*He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*" Though under the faithful care and watchful eye of the Good Shepherd, we have to pass through a world, in which many and powerful foes surround us, and closely beset our path, "The god of this world," we are sure, hates us, because he knows full well that when he is chained in the bottomless pit, we shall be in the full liberty of the glory with Christ. There is no book in all the Bible he tries to keep people from reading, or dislikes so much as the book of "The Revelation;" and, why? Because, therein his own complete overthrow, and eternal misery, are plainly foretold. He wants to conceal this from the eyes of men; and, alas, how wonderfully he has succeeded, as to this precious and profitable book. Many think it cannot be understood, and that it is unprofitable to read it; whereas, the Lord has connected a special blessing with the reading and the understanding of this book. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Chap. i. 3.) The Lord's judicial dealings, not only with Satan, the source of all evil, but with the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God, are

herein unfolded. He shows us how He will square accounts with each. There can be no millennium until these judgments are past. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" It is all important to see the final results of the rise and progress of these three great divisions of mankind. Other books show us the *failure*, "The Revelation," the *fall*, and the setting aside of these bodies, or classes, as the responsible witnesses of God in the earth. But more than that, "The Revelation" shows us the Lord Jesus Christ taking the place of the faithful and true witness, on the failure of all others, and re-establishing all things on a new footing, that God may be fully glorified in the scene wherein He has been dishonoured. "These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. . . . Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Rev. i. 5., iii. 14.

But we cannot yet say, in the language of the twenty-fourth Psalm, which is strictly millennial, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein." No; we are still on the ground of the twenty-third Psalm, as the sheep of Christ, in much weakness; and Satan is still "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Hence the many trials and sorrows by the way, and hence the need of the Lord's refreshing, restoring grace. Satan does all in his power to injure and terrify the sheep of Christ,

as they pass through his territory. He lays many snares for their feet, and he gilds many a scene, that he may attract the eye, and take it off the Good Shepherd who goes before them. Well the enemy knows that if they follow closely after Him, all his own snares and attractions are unsuccessful. He who goes before His flock meets the danger or the difficulty, and removes it, before they come up to it, blessed be His name. All difficulties vanish from His presence, and all enemies are powerless before Him. The great lesson to be learnt in the wilderness is *entire dependence on the Lord*.

When Israel had safely passed through the deep, and stood in triumph, as the Lord's redeemed, on the margin of the desert, their redemption was complete, but Canaan was not reached. The wilderness, with all its temptations and difficulties, lay between. The Lord had many lessons to teach His people there. But before they were called to this character of experience, God had made Himself known to them, in His grace and power, as the great "I AM." In their glorious deliverance out of the land of Egypt, He had acted for them, in pure grace, through the blood of the lamb. Thus far it was grace, without rebuke; so that they ought to have known Him as worthy of all their trust.

As characteristic of the wilderness, the first thing that meets them is a difficulty. "In which direction does our way to Canaan lie?" they might say to each other. There were no roads to be seen; nothing but a trackless desert lay before them. What was now to be done? Just what they were always to do, and

what the Lord's redeemed should ever do—LOOK UP. There they would see Jehovah Himself, the true Shepherd of Israel, in His cloudy chariot, moving on before them. They were only safe in following Him; having no will, no wish, no way of their own, only to follow Him, in the full assurance that He would lead them by the best way to the promised land. Oh, how happy for Israel, had this been the case *then*! and how happy for us *now*, were we always content thus closely to follow the Lord, "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls"!

But another and a deeper trial for Israel soon came. The knowledge of accomplished redemption, the full assurance of forgiveness, and the enjoyment of God's favour, never exempt us from trials and disappointments in this world. We have many profitable, though painful, lessons to learn in the wilderness. But if we never knew want, we could never know relief; and the value of a Divine restorative is best known to a fainting soul. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." What a disappointment! At the end of a three days' journey in the wilderness to find no water, and when they did find it, it was bitter. What a trial! But Jehovah, the great "I AM," was there; and faith could say, even in these circumstances, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He

restoreth my soul." His grace never fails. If I grow faint and weary, "He restoreth my soul." If I forget and fail, "He restoreth my soul." Yes, and more, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." Gracious Lord! He maintains my soul, in spite of my weakness, in the paths of true holiness. Such is the language of a calm and patient faith. But, on the other hand, the natural heart would reason within itself, and say, Can this be love? Does the Lord not care for His people, after redeeming them out of the hand of the enemy? Most surely He does: only have patience. He is about to teach them a lesson, which is of present, future, and eternal value,—a lesson which, when learnt, is worth all the disappointments of the desert to know. This is the object of His perfect love, in the present trial.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" And what, we may ask, could the man Moses do in such a state of things? Only, as before said,—LOOK UP. "And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Thus the Lord sweetens the bitter waters. It was not their murmurings that sweetened them, nor any means of their own devising, but the Lord's own remedy, and applied according to His own directions. He *only* can sweeten the bitter cup, but He *always* can, and He *always* does,—blessed be His name. Better have a bitter cup, and the Lord to sweeten it, than have no bitter cup at all; better far be cast, bound hand and foot, into the fiery fur-

nace, and have the honour and blessing of walking there, in perfect liberty, with "the Son of God," than be saved from going into the furnace. Oh, what a field, my soul, for meditation, is the rich field of experience! Like the hind let loose, roam through it, and feed in it. Shepherds tell us that "variety of pasture is good for the flocks;" and sure thou art, that to be occupied with only a part of God's word, and not with the whole, is to see only one side of truth, and not the truth of God generally. It is thus that many become narrow and confused in their views, and faulty in their faith and practice. In our beautiful and highly instructive Psalm we have the wide, wide field of wilderness life spread out before us.

But we will return to our lesson. What kind of a tree, we may ask, can this be, that changes the bitter waters into sweet? In all the forests of the universe, there is but one tree to be found that can do this. But this tree is a Divine specific; it never fails. It is enough to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever was pressed to human lips, and to turn all the bitterness of wilderness experience into the most delectable cup of heavenly blessedness. It was on that tree that Jesus died—that Divine love triumphed over human hatred—that God was fully glorified—that sin was utterly abolished—that Satan was completely overthrown—that death was made stingless—that the grave was made powerless—that eternal peace was made for the feeblest of the flock—that the gloomy gates of hell were for ever shut—and the glorious gates of heaven thrown wide open, for all who believe in Him who died upon the tree. This

tree, rooted in Calvary, sends its boughs of rich blessing into all the earth, and fills the highest heavens with its ripened fruits. It stands as the moral centre of the universe, and is the brightest display of God's moral glories that can ever be seen or known. Oh, who would not accept the wilderness cup, to be taught thereby the many glories of the Saviour's cross ? *

“ We are by Christ redeemed :
The cost—His precious blood ;
Be nothing by our souls esteemed
Like this great good.
To God our weakness clings
Through tribulation sore,
And seeks the covert of His wings
Till all be o'er.”

It is always true—true at all times, and true of all saints—that when the Good Shepherd “*putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice.*” This is a truth—a Divine principle—of immense value ; it has a deep and wide practical bearing. It assures our hearts that, whatever betide, He is at hand—always near ; within sight, as we may say, and within the sound of His voice. Yes, and the believer finds in the scene, through which the Lord has passed before him, such a fragrance of His presence, as not only strengthens, but enriches the soul therein. *When—*

* It will be of interest to many of our readers to know that this paper was written about two weeks before the event—so solemn and sudden to the writer—of July 1st, 1864. Then, as we may say, the sweet waters of health, affection, and activity were flowing around him. But it is now plain, that the Lord, in love, was preparing His servant, through communion with Himself, for what was so near at hand.

at what time soever, He putteth forth His own sheep, HE goeth before them. See that thou understandest well this precious truth, O my soul; it is the great truth for the sheep of Christ. It affects everything as to thy path through the world. It is thy safeguard in danger—thy victory in conflict—thy light in darkness—thy strength in weakness—thy comfort in sorrow—thy fellowship in solitude—thy brightest hope amidst the deepest gloom. He who is with thee and before thee, has tasted the bitterest sorrows of the wilderness, and has passed through the darkest night into the brightest day: and so shalt thou *only follow Him*.

This truth, so blessed to the pilgrim, assures us of the Shepherd's care in every step, rough or smooth, of our wilderness journey. He is ever present—He never leaves nor forsakes. And through His perfect knowledge of the way, He confounds the enemy, turning all his hostility to the account of our blessing and His own glory. Blessed fruit, through His grace, of all that befalls poor human nature, when travelling through the deep sand of the desert.

“ The Shepherd's bosom bears each lamb
O'er rock, and waste, and wild;
The object of that love I am—
And carried like a child.”

“ If any man serve me,” says the Lord, “ let him follow me.” He does not say, observe, “ let him *do this* for me, or *do that* ” but “ let him follow me.” Quietly to wait on the Lord that we may know His will, and faithfully to follow Him, hearkening to the

voice of His word, is the most pleasing service we can render to the Lord. Some He may lead into more public, others into more private paths of service, but closely to follow the directions of His word, while looking, by faith, to Himself, is our most acceptable service. And for all such He has left His richest promise. "And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John xii.

These weighty and solemn truths were uttered when the dark shadows of Gethsemane and Calvary were crossing His path. It is comparatively easy to be active for the Lord, and, as it were, to be doing some great thing for Him, in a bright and sunny day; but, oh, how difficult to follow Him through the solitudes of His rejection in a homeless world! Who of us can endure, it may be, to be separated from our dearest friends on earth, and to be thought weak and unstable? Who can endure to be in the outside place for the reproach of Christ? These waters are often very bitter. But His love *desires* that we should know something *experimentally* of His own path through this world, and the fellowship of His sufferings. It was not enough for the Lord's great love to Abel that he should bear testimony, by his slain lamb, to the truth that death had come by sin; but he was honoured to bear witness in a more solemn way in his own death. Not only was the blood of his lamb shed, but his own blood, as God's witness on the earth. How much more Abel had to do with death in this world than Cain! How significant, and solemnly instructive to all who follow with Abel!

But after all, it was the Lord's love to Abel, and the Lord's honour conferred on him.

We have the same great principle, in type, at the waters of Marah. The people knew the value of the blood of the lamb in Egypt, as their safeguard from judgment, and their complete redemption in virtue of that blood. And now the Lord would have them further to know, in their own experience, the unfailing power of the blood for all the vicissitudes of the wilderness. In this way they had to do with death in all their journeyings. They were marching through the wilderness, under the shelter of the blood—the expressive symbol of death. It was on this ground alone that Jehovah could say to Balaam, "I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." He does not say, "There is none there," but, "I have not seen it." True, it was all in type, but we can easily see what was always uppermost in the Lord's mind, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." As if the Lord had said, "When I see the blood of the lamb, I see that which glorified me—blotted out sin—destroyed the power of the enemy, and obtained eternal redemption for my beloved people." It left Jehovah free, in all circumstances, to act in pure grace towards the people. They had only to LOOK UP, however naughty they had been, or however sorely they were distressed, and grace flowed—the need was met—the bitter cup was sweetened, and they were freely forgiven.

The blood of the Lamb was their Divine passport from Egypt to Canaan. Nothing could stand before it; everything yields to its power. If the hosts of

Egypt attempt to stop the journeyings of the blood-sprinkled people, they are cast into the depths of the sea ; and if all the nations of the earth had sided with them, they must have shared the same fate. " I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." The deep waters of the Red Sea must make a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over ; not an hoof was left behind. The manna, the cloud, and the living stream from the flinty rock are supplied, all enemies are subdued, and every need is met in virtue of the same precious blood. And though the river of death, at the end of their journeyings, overflowed all its banks, and Jericho walled to heaven, as the threatening rage of the enemy, and the tokens of his power, they present no barrier to the infinite power of the blood. But where is its power not felt and owned, willingly or unwillingly ? It rent the veil of heaven, and unlocked the portals of the grave. What is higher than heaven ? What is deeper than hell ? Matt. xxvii. 50—53.

But we are all prone to forget, like Israel of old, what the Lord has done for us—what bitter cup He drank for us—and that we carry through the wilderness with us, the same " token " of His unchanging love. Hence, we often need to get a taste of the bitter, in order to remind us of that which alone can sweeten ; and that all the difficulties, trials, and temptations of this life, are to be borne in fellowship with Him. This His love desires. He has gone through them all *for* us, and that with infinite patience, meekness, and wisdom, as an example *to* us. And, oh ! wondrous grace, He allows to us in our afflictions, a ministry of

love, sympathy, and kindness, which He allowed not Himself. He was forsaken of God in His sore distress—He was surrounded by the violence and rage of His shameless enemies, who gaped upon Him with their mouths like ravening and roaring lions. All refuge failed Him, comforters there were none. Ps. xxii. 1–21.

This was for us ; there He drank the bitter cup of God's wrath against sin. And He *will* have us to know Him there, in love for us. And we have to learn by experience, however painful the lesson, that nothing but the bitter cup of Calvary can sweeten the bitter cup of Marah. In other words, the sympathies of His heart who died there, are alone sufficient to soothe the sorrows of ours. But glory be to God, who gave His Son, we find all in Jesus. His cross is ours—His heart is ours. The full value of the cross is ours—the tender, boundless sympathies of His heart are ours—ours now—ours for ever. Oh ! wonderful, precious, blessed truth ! What more do we need ? The cross and heart of Jesus—ours. Eternal springs of all blessing ! The blest, though bitter waters of Marah, lead to a deeper knowledge of Calvary ; and the deep and painful need of a broken heart, to deeper fellowship with His. He could say, and in truth, as none else ever could, " Reproach hath broken my heart." Yes, and more, in place of the tender sympathies of fellow-pilgrims, which His people so abundantly enjoy, He had to add—" And I am full of heaviness ; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none." (Ps. lxi.) Oh ! what a refuge we have in the once broken and desolate heart of Jesus !

"Jesus, my All in all Thou art,
 My rest in toil, my ease in pain ;
 The medicine of my broken heart ;
 'Mid storms, my peace ; in loss, my gain ;
 My smile beneath the tyrant's frown ;
 In shame, my glory and my crown.

"In want, my plentiful supply ;
 In weakness, my almighty power ;
 In bonds, my perfect liberty ;
 My refuge in temptation's hour ;
 My comfort 'midst all grief and thrall,
 My life in death, my All in all.

When the Lord has thus brought us down to a true sense of our own weakness, and to more real dependence on His unfailing strength and constant care, the purposes of His tender love are answered. The deeper the trial, the stronger the expression of His love. And now we can say, in the rich experience of our souls, "HE restoreth my soul." Not the green pastures and the still waters, pleasant and excellent as these are—no ; but the Lord Himself. The path becomes more and more individualised ; there must be greater nearness to the Lord as our Shepherd, and more direct fellowship with Himself. "HE restoreth my soul : HE leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for *His Name's sake*."

"Alone with Thee, my God ! alone with Thee !
 Thus would'st Thou have it still—thus let it be.
 There is a secret chamber in each mind,
 Which none can find
 But He who made it—none beside can know
 Its joy or woe.

Oft may I enter it, oppressed by care,
 And find Thee there ;
 So full of watchful love, Thou knowest the why
 Of every sigh,
 Then all Thy righteous dealing shall I see,
 Alone with Thee, my God ! alone with Thee !

“ The joys of earth are like a summer’s day,
 Fading away ;
 But in the twilight we may better trace
 Thy wondrous grace.
 The homes of earth are emptied oft by death
 With chilling breath ;
 The loved departed guest may ope no more
 The well-known door.
 Still in that chamber sealed, Thou’lt dwell with me,
 And I with Thee, my God ! alone with Thee !

“ The world’s false voice would bid me enter not
 That hallowed spot ;
 And earthly thoughts would follow on the track,
 To hold me back,
 Or seek to break the sacred peace within,
 With this world’s din.
 But, by Thy grace, I’ll cast them all aside,
 Whate’er betide,
 And never let that cell deserted be,
 Where I may dwell alone, my God, with Thee !

“ The war may rage !—keep Thou the citadel,
 And all is well.
 And when I learn the fulness of Thy love,
 With Thee above,—
 When every heart oppressed by hidden grief
 Shall gain relief,—
 When every weary soul shall find its rest
 Amidst the blest,—
 Then all my heart, from sin and sorrow free,
 Shall be a temple meet, my God, for Thee !”

Before passing on to the fourth verse, which gives a still deeper shade of wilderness trials and sorrows, we would turn for a moment to another use and application of "a tree," which may be for our edification.

In 2 Kings vi. 1—7, we have an account of "the sons of the prophets" going to the banks of the Jordan, to cut down beams of trees, for the purpose of enlarging their dwelling-place. "And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye." The young prophets, very wisely, secure the presence of Elisha with them. He consents to go; and works a miracle there, which saves them from the loss of the head of the borrowed axe. "And one said, Be content, I pray thee, to go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. *And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.* Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it."

Some have thought that there is a deep typical meaning in this apparently unimportant incident; others have been afraid to press it as such. But surely, at any rate, it is a striking *illustration* of re-

urrection life and power. As to the typical meaning of Jordan, all are agreed. It is the type of death. And as for "the axe head," it lay as *lost* and *dead* in its depths. And what is deeply interesting, and instructive too, in connection with this miracle, Elisha was, typically, the *resurrection-life prophet*. He passed through the river of death in company with Elijah, and started on his ministry of grace and resurrection power from the point of the ascended prophet. (2 Kings ii.) Elijah's ministry, on the contrary, was *judicial* in its character. He started, we may say, from Sinai, which stamped its character on his miracles. He shut the heavens over a rebellious people, "and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." And he called down fire from heaven on the captains of the idolatrous king of Israel. At Horeb he became linked up with the broken law, and the responsibility of the people, so that his ministry called for judgment.

But Elisha starts from resurrection ground, and with his eye, as it were, on the ascended man. This is the place of God's measureless grace—the place of the risen Christ Himself, and the saved myriads that joyfully cluster around Him. Scarcely had the two prophets crossed the Jordan, when Elijah proposed blessing to Elisha, according to the desires of his heart. Not now, observe, according to law, or earthly promise, but according to his heart's desire. "And it came to pass, when they had gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon

me." They had left the land of law and earthly promise behind them ; and death, the judgment of God against sin, was past, so that He was free to bless. This is grace, and most significant as to the character of Elisha's mission, and of God's ways in grace, through the death and resurrection of Christ, down to the present time.

Here pause for a moment, my soul, and meditate on this instructive scene. God begins His work where sin, Satan, and all evil, cease from theirs. He quickens the dead. No evil can ever cross the grave of Christ. The path of life, and holy, happy liberty, is beyond the domain of death. Elisha, observe, now returns to Israel ; but all is changed. He acts in grace, according to the new condition of things. Sweet foreshadowing of the risen Jesus, who died for us, and for God's glory, so that His grace flows forth freely to the children of men now, and will do so abundantly to Israel in the latter day. Elisha tarries at Jericho, the place of the curse ; but he brings in the power of God in blessing, and removes the curse, and heals the spring of waters, so that there would be no more death or barren land. "And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the ground is barren. And he said, Bring me a *new cruse*, and put *salt* therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth into the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters : there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were

healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha, which he spake."

Salt is a well-known symbol in Scripture. Here it represents the healing power of grace, as flowing through the death and resurrection of Christ. The whole scene is richly and permanently blessed. Evil is overcome; the curse is removed from the ground—the world—and especially from His people Israel; and the spring of waters—the fountain of blessing—secured for ever. The "new cruse" may shadow forth the renewed condition of all things under Christ in the latter day. The prophet next proceeds to Bethel, which, we know, speaks of God's unchangeable faithfulness to Jacob and to his seed for ever. Now he links the people with the sovereign counsels of God's love and grace towards them. From thence the prophet goes to *Carmel*, which tells us of the fruitful land; thus connecting the people with the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the abundance of the land. What grace! The curse removed—evil put away—the scene purified—the spring of waters healed—the God of Bethel known and enjoyed; and the blessings of Carmel covering the land like a fruitful field. Nevertheless—oh, most solemn and weighty warning for the present moment, as well as for all time!—if the testimony of the grace of God be despised, and His messengers mocked, judgment must take its course. Ver. 20, 21.

Thus, in my meditations, have my thoughts traced, and retraced, the mystic path of these two great servants of God in this wonderful second chapter, though professedly meditating on the miracle in the sixth.

But the ground we have gone over sheds wondrous light on the miracle. It now looks more like a passage in Ephesians or in 1 Peter. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

There is no power to save the lost, or to quicken the dead soul, but the cross of Christ. When the tree is cast into the waters, the iron swims. The moment the cross is seen by faith, and applied by the Holy Spirit, the soul is quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All this takes place in virtue of our union with Christ, *when* we believe in His name, and trust in His cross. But, alas, till then, the soul, however, light, gay, and active, or otherwise, is, morally and spiritually, in the place of death. Oh that poor, thoughtless, Christless souls would think of that now! What a condition to be in! The place of death—the cold depths of the river of death! What a lowering, what a sinking, of an immortal soul,—a soul that grace can render capable of enjoying God, and His Son, and the full glories of heavenly blessedness, for ever!

Where, oh, where, let me ask, is my reader at this moment? In the depths, or on the heights? It must be either the one or the other. There is no middle place. To die in the former state is to be there for ever, in the depths of anguish and despair. There can be no change after death. And wilt thou,

O thoughtless one, sell thy eternal happiness for a moment's present gratification? Why be so unreasonable, so cruel to thine own soul? Was it wise in Esau to sell the whole land of Canaan for a mess of pottage, because he could enjoy the latter at the moment? Wouldst thou call this manly, noble, or high spirited? And is it wise in thee to sell the heavenly Canaan for that which can be enjoyed only for a moment in this world? Do think of all this, my dear fellow-sinner. Thy present life is most uncertain; and what an agony to those left behind, were there no hope in thy death! And what an eternity—thine! What could sweeten such a bitter cup as this, or change its wormwood and its gall? Oh, then, from every consideration, look to Jesus now—just now—before laying down this paper. Let thine eyes and thine heart be lifted up to Him. "Look unto me," He says, "and be ye saved." The great work of redemption *was finished on the cross*; there is nothing for thee to wait for. "*It is finished!*" Only look to Him, believing this, and thou art surely and for ever saved.

"When the harvest is past, and the summer is gone,
And sermons and prayers shall be o'er;
When the beams cease to break of the sweet Sabbath morn,
And Jesus invites thee no more;
When the rich gales of mercy no longer shall blow,
The gospel no message declare;
Sinner, how canst thou bear the deep wailings of woe?
How suffer the night of despair?

"When the holy have gone to the regions of peace,
To dwell in the mansions above;

D

When their harmony wakes, in the fulness of bliss,
Their song to the Saviour they love ;—
Say, O sinner, that livest at rest and secure,
Who fearest no trouble to come,
Can thy spirit the wailings of sorrow endure,
Or bear the impenitent's doom ?”

But some, I know, are ready to say, by way of excusing themselves, that if they are as dead as the iron at the bottom of the stream, they must be entirely *passive* in the work of conversion. There is *some* truth in this remark, but it is far from being the *whole* truth. The soul is dead as regards God and spiritual things, but it is all alive as regards this world. There is no heart or energy for Christ and His salvation, but there is plenty of both for present things ; and Scripture presses, in innumerable places, the *responsibility* of the sinner. It assures him that the work by which alone he can be saved is finished, and that he has only to believe it on the sure testimony of God Himself ; and, thus believing it, he is saved, and finds his present and eternal rest in Jesus.

“*Wilt thou go with this man ?*” is a plain question. And where is the sinner—active and intelligent as to present things—who cannot answer, Yes, or No ?

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God*

hath the witness (or testimony) in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; *because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*" "WHOSOEVER shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts xvi. 31; John iii. 19; 1 John v. 9, 10; Rom. x. 13.

Thus we find in types and shadows, truths and substance, that there is no virtue for the soul apart from Christ,—from Christ crucified. The knowledge of Jesus, His love, His cross, quickens the dead sinner, and gives him a place with the risen Jesus. It strengthens the weak saint—upholds the fainting spirit—comforts those that are in trouble and bowed down. It destroys the power of the waters of Jordan, and sweetens the waters of Marah.

Ver. 4. "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" This verse of our beautiful Psalm is generally spoken of as descriptive of the believer's experience in the passage of death—the death of the body. "The valley" is generally viewed as the path that lies between the two regions of life; and, though dark and dismal, the saint of God, having the Shepherd's rod to guide, and His staff to comfort him, need fear no evil.

Most truly, there is every reason for the departing soul, calmly to trust the Lord at that solemn moment, and during that brief but mysterious passage; but we do not think the text refers, merely, to the believer's experience in his *own death*, but rather to the dark shadow which the death of *another* may cast on

his path. To the departing one, all shadows flee away. To those left behind, they may be dark and heavy. For example:—

A dear and loved fellow-pilgrim has been called up higher. His or her place is empty. The broken circle is overwhelmed in sorrow. The whole scene below is clouded. The pallor of death shades everything to the eye, and in the felt loneliness of the bereaved heart, the path, once so bright and joyous, has been turned into "*the valley of the shadow of death.*" But the happy soul of the dear departed rests in the pure light of God, and in the unmingled blessedness of His presence.

"No shadows yonder—all light and song;
Each day I wander; and say, How long
Shall time me sunder from that dear throng?

"No weeping yonder—all fled away!
While here I wander each weary day,
And sigh, as I ponder my long, long stay.

"*No partings yonder!*—time and space never
Again shall sunder—hearts cannot sever—
Dearer and fonder, *hands clasp for ever.*

"None wanting yonder;—bought by the Lamb,
All gathered under the ever green palm,
Loud as night's thunder ascends the glad psalm

In the text, we doubt not, it is the *shadow* of death that the pilgrim speaks of walking through, and of his experience therein, not of *death itself*. Were it his own death, surely it would not be called a shadow. To go through death, and to go mourning through its shadows, are widely different things.

Here pause for a moment, O my soul. Such experience demands thy calm and deep meditation. In the whole realm of creation, no event is more solemn. The sanctuary is thy proper place. God's eye, His word and Spirit, alone can guide.

The *experience* of the believer is changed, though still under the Shepherd's tender care and mighty hand. Yes—everything is changed—changed as from light to darkness—as from joy to sorrow—as from strength to weakness. What a change! In the third verse, the pilgrim *tastes* the waters of Marah; in the fourth, he is *plunged* into them. But the Lord Himself has done it. It must be well, and wise, and good; it must be the strongest expression of His love, and of His shepherd care. "Thou art with me"—Thou, O Lord, who knowest the *taste* of the waters, and the *depths* of the waters too, as none of Thy people ever can know.

A loved one may be ill, very ill; all hope of recovery may be gone; still the soul is present in the body, and thoughts may be exchanged. But the moment the soul has passed into the unseen world, this ceases—absolutely—irretrievably ceases. The dear departed one may love as ever, nay, infinitely more than ever, for "God is love," and heaven is its home. The love of the bereaved may be quickened into a burning flame, and the desire to express it may be intensified a thousand-fold, but there is no more communication of thought—no exchange of affection. The dark impenetrable veil that separates the two states of being must not be passed. Faith alone may cross the threshold, and see the departed one resting

—at home—with Jesus—in the Paradise of God. For a moment, the eye is bright—something like gladness passes through the mind; but a tender recollection touches the heart—the eye is dimmed—and sadness presses down the weary soul. Everything, save the blessed Lord Himself, seems gone; but He is near, very near, blessed be His name. “Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

“Be still, my soul!—when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul!—thy Jesus can repay
From His own fulness all He takes away.”

Could there be, however far apart, only the means of exchanging our thoughts and affections, it would no longer be death. We may often be parted from each other in this life, without the thought ever crossing the mind that we have suffered loss. Letters go and come; the path of the absent one may be traced and the joys of return anticipated. This is life—the object of affection is possessed. It is neither death, nor its dark shadow. But from the moment that the Lord has taken the soul to Himself, all such communion is at an end. The awful fact of separation is felt. The heart may burn with the purest affection, for love never faileth—the whole soul may long to say something to, and to hear something from, the loved departed, but all is in vain. The body may be there still, and every feature may only seem in calm repose; but that which thought, loved, intended, remembered, is gone. Stillness reigns—the stillness

that is indescribable. You cannot awaken the sleeping one. The heart that would have been moved to its depths by a sigh, or melted by a tear, hears not the deepest wail, and sees not the flowing tears. This is death—the death of the mortal body. And, to those that are left behind, it is “the valley of the shadow of death.” And so dense is that shadow sometimes in this weary wilderness, that even the heavenly orbs seem changed, and shine differently.

At such a time, the enemy is sure to assail the distressed soul, from all points, with his fiery darts. A thousand thoughts may be suggested from the past. A lifetime may be reviewed in a moment by a mind in agony. Time misspent—precious opportunities allowed to pass unimproved, may be amongst the accusations of the foe. In such overwhelming circumstances, nothing but the firm footing of God’s own plain statement of truth could bear up the stricken soul. But the Good and Great Shepherd is near. He causeth His voice to be heard. The eye is turned to Him. He lifts the fainting soul, folds it in His bosom, and bears it far above its mere human feelings and spiritual foes. What would such trials and conflicts be, could we not say in truth, “Thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ?”

Nothing can now be known of the condition and occupation of the loved departed, save that which holy Scripture reveals. But, oh, blessed be the God of all grace ! the light of a cloudless sky rests on the whole scene—the beams of divine light break through the darkness of these darkest of earthly days—we can see behind the veil. From the chamber of death,

to the house of many mansions, a bright pathway has been consecrated for the believer, by the risen and victorious Christ. The light of the glory "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath *abolished death*, and hath brought *life and immortality* to light through the gospel." 2 Tim. i. 10.

Glorious truth ! precious certainty for the believer—for every believer in Christ Jesus—*death was abolished on the cross*, and triumphed over in the resurrection of Jesus ; and by the gospel, *eternal life to the soul*, and *incorruptibility to the body*, have been brought into the clearest, fullest light. There may be great feebleness, on the part of many Christians, in apprehending these all-precious truths, but the blessed facts remain the same. They are all connected with the *Person* of Christ ; and from the moment that He is received and trusted, the believer is associated with Him beyond the power of death and the grave. "I know," says the apostle, "*whom* I have believed (*trusted*, margin), and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (Ver. 12.) Christ, *personally*, was his one object. All that was dear to the apostle, right on to the glory, was committed to Him.

What truths—what comfort for the soul that is passing through the dark valley ! *Death annulled—the eternal life of the soul possessed—the incorruptibility of the body secured*. Such is the sure portion of all who have fallen asleep in Jesus—of all who can say with the apostle, "I know whom I have trusted"—of

all who are simply looking by faith to Jesus, and resting on Him alone for salvation.

"THE FORMER THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY."

" Oh, she's reached the sunny shore,
Over there !

She will never suffer more,
All her pain and grief is o'er,
Over there !

" Oh, the streets are shining gold,
Over there !

And the glory is untold,
'Tis our Shepherd's peaceful fold,
Over there !

" Oh, she feels no chilling blast,
Over there !

For her winter-time is past,
And the summers always last,
Over there !

" Oh, she's done the weary fight,
Over there !

Jesus saved her by His might,
And she walks with Him in white,
Over there !

" Oh, she needs no lamp at night,
Over there !

For the day is always bright,
And the Saviour is her light,
Over there !

" Oh, she never sheds a tear,
Over there !

For the Lord Himself is near,
And to Him she's ever dear,

Over there !”

“ GOD IS LOVE.”

“ MY BELOVED SPAKE, AND SAID UNTO ME, RISE UP, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY. FOR, LO, THE WINTER IS PAST, THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE.”

Here, meditate, O my soul, on this wondrous revelation—this bursting forth of light, and living strength from the dark and, hitherto, unknown regions of the tomb. The victory is complete ! Christ has, personally, gone through the straits of death, and cleared the passage for all His followers, of every difficulty and danger. He who was in the lowest parts of the earth is now in glory. And from that glory—*the glory of God in the risen Man*—Divine light now shines into these low and lonely depths. The gloom of death is dissipated—the darkness of the grave illuminated—the *shadows* of death are only on the human side, and felt by our poor human hearts.

Death itself, by man, the justly styled King of Terrors, is completely vanquished ! Every circumstance of death and the grave is mastered for ever. The Lord is risen from among the dead, and associates us with Himself in resurrection life, power, and glory. What a blessed position to be brought into ! We stand on the same triumphant ground as the Conqueror Himself, and enjoy, with Him, the spoils of His victories.

What is death ? What is the passage of death ?

What are the issues of death? are questions that had never been fully answered in Scripture until now. Up till the time that the blessed Lord appeared, died, rose again, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, comparatively little was known on these solemn subjects. No doubt, godly souls in Old Testament times, who had been taught of the Spirit to trust God through all their pilgrim days could quietly trust Him in the hour of their departure. The last glimpse we have of Jacob is truly beautiful. We see him as an aged pilgrim, leaning on his staff, worshipping the living God. And the picture of Joseph is that of peace and victory. "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." Heb. xi. 21, 22.

But to the Jew, as such, the subject of death was necessarily a more gloomy one than it is to the Christian; consequently, the application of verse 4 (Ps. xxiii.) would be somewhat different to the latter. It is of the Jews that the apostle speaks when he says, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christians may get into this state of mind, and some may never have been in any other, but it is certainly contrary to the cheering light and happy liberty of the gospel. Such, we fear, have never seen, or understood, the death and resurrection of Christ, as God's great principle of blessing to the Christian. This is the alone ground

of peace with God, *oneness* with Christ, and of full liberty from the fear of death.

Again, to the Jew, as such, this world was *the land of the living*. It was the place of his blessing; and the great promise to obedience was, "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "I had fainted," says the psalmist, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." (Ps. xxvii. 13.) But to the Christian, we may say, it is *the land of the dying*. "I protest," says Paul, . . . "*I die daily*." It is also the land of death—the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; consequently, it is the valley of the shadow of death. The cross has thrown its dark shadow over the whole scene. And where, it may be asked, is the place of the Christian's joy and blessing? In heavenly places in Christ.

Heaven is the Christian's home; he is from home in this world. As men, we speak of the place where we were born as our *natural place*; then is the Christian entitled to speak of heaven as *his* natural place. He is born of God—born from above. And the place, circumstances, and company that are suited and proper to his nature as a child of God, are on high. And never, never, until he reaches the shores of his fatherland, shall he breathe his native air, or know what the *feeling of home* means. Hence, the instinctive longings and desires of the heart to reach his father's house are only natural.

"My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks through the ruin of her clay,
And practises her wings.

“ Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies
Her fair inheritance in light,
Above created skies.

“ Some rays of heaven break sweetly in
At all the opening flaws ;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws.”

Here, in this body of sin and death, and sojourning in a world of evil, where Christ was crucified, we may have much and most blessed fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. But this is the effect of grace in the midst of evil, and of the Holy Ghost's presence *in the believer*. The Father cares for the children—the Shepherd cares for the sheep, and the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth is the power by which we enjoy our inheritance on high.

This is a *great truth*, my soul; the truth, I mean, as to thy new birth—thy new life—that thou art born of God—born from above—quickened together with Christ! What then? What flows therefrom? That thou art a child of God—an heir of God—a joint-heir with Christ, and placed in Him, far, far above the power of death and the grave. Meditate, I repeat, O meditate, deeply, patiently, on what is involved in this most marvellous truth. The knowledge thereof will go far to explain thy wilderness experience, relieve thee of thy wilderness burdens, and shed a flood of light over the dark valley.

Beyond all question, all who have been quickened since death entered by sin, have received their new

life, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle, referring to Old Testament saints, speaks of "*the Spirit of Christ which was in them.*" He is that eternal life which was with the Father, and was, in due time, manifested unto us. There is no other life—no life anywhere else, for the soul dead in sin. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (1 John v. 11, 12; John iii. 36.) But although, from the beginning, life could only be found in and by Christ; still, it appears quite evident, that the *condition* of the life enjoyed by the Christian, is quite different to that of the Old Testament saint. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John x. 10.) This *abundant life*, we doubt not, is life in resurrection. John xx. 22.

Not only is the Christian a child of God, but he is said to be quickened *together* with Christ, raised up *together*, and seated *together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now, only mark, into what scenes of blessedness this *great truth*—this union with Christ, introduces the believer? United to Him, the risen Head, He communicates to us the privileges of His own position before God. He is the well-spring of the believer's new life; it is fed by Him every moment. Neither sin, Satan, nor death can ever touch it. The Christian, by faith, has begun his eternity with

Christ. He needs not to wait till death, or the coming of the Lord, relieve him.

The foundation of all this *great truth* for the soul, is the death and resurrection of Christ, He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In the greatness of His love, He bore the burden of our sins in His own body on the tree. Death in all its bitterness He tasted for us, and put away sin, the source and sting of death, by the sacrifice of Himself. But God raised up that blessed One, and quickened us *together with Him*. And now, blessed be His name, we know of a truth, that our evil nature has been judged, our sin and sins all blotted out—that righteousness has been divinely accomplished—that our peace with God is made—and that we are one with the risen Jesus, in an entirely new sphere, where no evil can ever come, and where the light of God's countenance shines on us perfectly and for ever. 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Heb. ii. 9; ix. 26; Col. ii. 12, 13; Eph. ii.; 1 Cor. xv.

This is the only position from which death can be fairly and calmly viewed. Like Joshua of old, who, from Canaan's side of Jordan, returned to its centre, and *there* planted his twelve stones of victory. From the heavenly side he could calmly contemplate the river of death, and go down into its depths. But the priests were there before him with the ark of the covenant, and, with "the Lord of the whole earth," it was as easy to pass the Jordan as the Red Sea.

But to the merely *natural man*, who knows he is unpardoned—unsaved—death must be a fearful thing.

If he thinks at all about it, and is intelligent and honest, the very thought of it must be dreadful. Death and judgment, the fruit of sin, are the two great objects of men's fears. And so they may. Terrible indeed, to an immortal soul, must be the consequences of death and judgment. And how *humbling*, too, is death to the natural man. He must succumb. The strong man must bow to it—the proud man must humble himself to it. The wise and the rich are alike unable to avoid it or resist it. It is an implacable enemy, that cannot be appeased or turned aside—that cannot be guarded against—that will not be sent away—that is relentless, rapacious, insatiable.

Can I prevail on my reader, if this be his, or her, state, to give this subject a serious thought? And, oh, let it be now—just now. Delay not! Time is on the wing—thy days are flying fast—already they may be few. And what then? The eternal ages—an eternity of unmingled blessedness, or unutterable woe.

In the whole field of fallen human nature, there is nothing to be found more awful than death. For as in the forest, so in this field, "as the tree falls, so it lies." How solemn—how eternally solemn! As death finds the soul, so will the judgment-seat, and so will a long, long eternity. Beyond death there is no repentance. As the breath leaves the body, the state is unalterably fixed. This is man's last change—a change which admits of no succeeding one for ever. Oh, then, my dear reader, listen to the affectionate entreaties of one who loves thy soul, and would ear-

nestly warn thee against neglecting its salvation ! “ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? ” The whole material world, in the Saviour’s estimation, is of less value than one human soul. And, it may be, that the well-being of thy precious soul has never cost thee a serious thought. The most ordinary things of this life, or some ornament for thy person, may have cost thee more thought than thy soul’s eternal destinies, or the sufferings and death of Christ, by which alone it can be saved.

Do think, I pray thee, my fellow-sinner, on this all-important subject ! At all costs yield to its pressing claims. If it should involve the breaking of many engagements as to this life, and the blasting of all thy prospects therein, care not ; suffer not such considerations to detain thee on the world’s enchanted ground, or hinder thy decision for Christ. Remember this—and this is plain—that he who sides not with Christ, sides with Satan, and must share with him the lake of fire. This is the second death. Oh, dreadful thought ! What shall I say unto thee ? How shall I plead with thee ? Shall I fall down at thy feet and shed the beseeching tear ? Shall I be as a fool in thy sight ? Shall my loud and bitter cry be to thee as the noise of some fanatic—or of one who is righteous overmuch ? Well, be it so ; all these and more. I speak from feeling, not by rule. I am content if only thou wilt bethink thyself, and flee at once to Jesus, who has paid the ransom-price of the sinner’s redemption. To see thee at last, as a jewel in the Saviour’s crown, or as a monument of grace

on the plains of eternal glory, would be a rich compensation for being reckoned fool or madman, in this world. But, soberly, tears of blood, could I shed them, would not be too much to shed over a soul that refuses the provision God has made, for His own glory in our eternal happiness.

Jesus, God's blessed Son, "was made a little lower than the angels . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) Here all is plain. Scripture never exaggerates, if preachers do. What does this text teach us? This truth, plainly, that sin, unrepented of, brings the sinner to the place that the grace of God brought Christ. In grace and love, He took the sinner's place—the place of the curse—the forsaken place, where it was not possible that the cup of wrath should pass from Him. Now we see, in the cross, where sin leads to—what sin deserves—and how God deals with it. Doubtless, sin was measured and dealt with in the holy person of Jesus, in a way that can never be done even in the lake of fire. God's hatred of sin was *perfectly* expressed on the cross. One drop of that cup which He drained—one stroke of that judgment which He exhausted, would sink a world of rebellious sinners in the depths of woe. But there, alas, the cup will never be drained—the judgment never exhausted.

Truly, may we not say,—If such things were done in the green tree, what must it be in the dry? If the true and living tree so felt the fires of holy justice, what must become of the dry and rotten tree? If He, who had not a particle of sin in Himself, was thus dealt with, when sin was imputed to Him, where

shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? What, my friend, would the rotten branch of thy good deeds avail thee, in the swellings of Jordan? One thing seems perfectly plain—he who rejects God's green tree now, can have nothing to say at last, when God rejects the dry.

But, oh, the Lord grant that this may never be the case with thee, my reader, or with any soul who has ever read, or heard, that beautiful text, "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." What a revelation of the heart of God for us! "*By the grace of God*;" and what a blessed work by the Son! He tasted death that we might never taste it. Oh, believe it—rest in Jesus—trust all to His finished work! Glory in the fact that the God of all grace loves thee—that He spared from His bosom, His well-beloved Son, that He might taste death for thee a sinner. And now, can I hear thee saying, "Bless the Lord—He has tasted death for me a sinner. Now I believe it—the bitterness of death is past—had I a hundred hearts He should have them all"?

"Descending from glory on high,
 With men Thy delight was to dwell,
 Contented our Surety to die,
 By dying to save us from hell;
 Enduring the grief and the shame,
 And bearing our sin on the cross,
 Oh! who would not boast of this love,
 And count the world's glory but loss?"

It is well for thee, my soul, to plead, and to plead

earnestly, with sinners who are unprepared for death. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," as the apostle says, "we persuade men." But now, for a little while, let thy contemplations be confined to the triumphs of the *saint* in that solemn hour. Thou hast spoken of the human side—the dark valley; now look at the heavenly side—the way of glory. Suppose then—

The messenger of peace is come—come to close, in quiet sleep, the pilgrim days of one who has been something like forty years in the wilderness. Of one, we shall still suppose, who had become foot-weary, but whose sympathies were all with Christ and His people, and who cared for the testimony of Jesus on the earth. But the Lord's appointed time has come. The tie is dissolved; the body is left behind; the happy soul is liberated—it is present with the Lord.

Here pause one moment, my soul. Pray what tie is it that is dissolved? *The tie that binds the divine life in the earthen vessel.* "For we know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here the apostle speaks on behalf of all Christians. "*We* know." There is no thought whatever, in such a case, of death being "the wages of sin." Christ, our Surety, paid the penalty in full—so full, we may say, that it is not necessary the Christian should die at all. And certain it is, that all Christians shall not die. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle plainly, "but we shall all be changed." And again, "then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up to—

gether with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 17.) The dissolving of the tabernacle, gently or roughly, touches not our eternal life in the risen Jesus. It simply dissolves its connection with the earthen vessel. The new man in Christ can never taste of death.

But here it may be profitable to dwell a little on the blessed and comforting truth just alluded to, namely, *that all Christians* shall not die—that many shall be *changed*, and caught up with the *quicken*ed dead to meet the Lord in the air. It is quite evident from the passages already quoted, that those who are alive on the earth when the Lord comes, shall not pass through death at all. In their case, as the apostle says, "*Mortality shall be swallowed up of life.*" Such will be the power of life in the Son of the living God, that every trace of mortality, in their human nature, shall instantly disappear from His presence. It will be swallowed up—annihilated. And, observe, it is *mortality*, not *death*, that is here said to be swallowed up of life. Death, too, we know, shall be *swallowed up in victory*. In the one case, the apostle refers to those who have fallen asleep in Jesus; in the other, to those who are alive on the earth at His coming. How beautiful and interesting is the perfect accuracy of Scripture! If a word is changed, there is an important reason for the change. The same truths and their *distinctiveness* are taught by the Lord, when speaking of Himself as the resurrection and the life. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; *he that believeth in me, though he were*

dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John xi. 25, 26.

But need we wonder at this manifestation of the power of life in the coming Lord? Sin, we may say, is an accidental thing. It is no part of the divine arrangements. It was introduced by an enemy. But every particle of the poison of sin, with all its baneful effects, shall be completely expelled from the living saints when the Lord comes for them. There is no need that they should die: Christ has died for them. And oh! how sweet the thought, it will be the same body still, but without the sin and its effects. Then shall our bodies of humiliation be fashioned like unto His body of glory; yet the *perfect identity of each shall be preserved*. And all this, observe, shall be accomplished by the power of a life, which we *now* see in the risen Jesus; and, O, wondrous truth! this life is *ours*—ours *now*—ours in Him, where all is victory!

It is most interesting to observe, what we may call the *fourfold state*, in which our divine life is here contemplated in the reasonings of the apostle. (2 Cor. iv. 6—18; v. 1—9.) But although it is viewed in four different aspects or conditions, the life itself remains unchanged and unchangeably the same. It is *eternal life*—the life of the risen and glorified Christ.

He had spoken in the third chapter, of the gospel in contrast with law—of the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit, in contrast with the ministration of death and condemnation. The law, as presenting God's claims on man, condemns him, because he breaks it. But the gospel *reveals* a righteousness

on God's part, in place of *requiring* it from man. Christ Himself is this righteousness. When He is received by faith, we are made the righteousness of God in Him, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—liberty from the pressure of law, and from the fear of death.

Christ glorified, is the foundation of the whole argument. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The man Christ Jesus, who was on the cross for us, as our sin-Bearer, is now on the throne. Blessed proof to the heart, of the perfect and eternal settlement of the whole question of sin. Humanity has been carried to the throne of God, The Divine glory is fully displayed in the risen Man, He is also the blessed manifestation of *our* place and portion in the same glory. And, oh precious truth! in meditating on this glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus, we are changed into His likeness, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Lord, grant me this grace, that I may indeed meditate, with delight and intelligence, on Thy glory, and become here, on earth, its true reflection.

The apostle preached to the world the good news of Christ in glory. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." He preached Christ victorious over sin and Satan, death and the grave. He invited and entreated sinners to believe on a *glorified Christ*—to come to Him in faith, and enjoy the love, and share the blessings and glories of the Saviour.

Christ has established righteousness for the sinner in the presence of God, so that there need be no doubting and fearing. The full blessing is promised to all who trust in Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." What an immense power there is in such a gospel; but what weakness must characterize every other! All who believe the gospel Paul preached, are introduced into the pure light of the glory as it is revealed in Christ. Those who reject the light, are, alas! blinded by Satan, the god of this world. What a thought! Refusing the glorified Saviour, alas! alas! they fall into the hands of the enemy.

The sixth verse gives the explanation of what we call the *first state*. "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" The heart is the vessel of the light. A light from the glory is kindled in the human heart. Divine life, through faith in a glorified Christ, being thus communicated, we are responsible for its manifestation, as *a light shining in a dark place*. It is the light of life. It comes direct from God. He who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts. Christ is our life, our light, our glory. In this dark world, before the eyes of man, we are called to be the reflection of our absent Lord. This is the *first state* of the new life. And how important! What a place it gives us here! The men of this world, who will neither read the Bible nor religious books, will surely read the lives of Christians. Oh, to be an epistle of Christ,

known and read of all men ! As the Jew could read the ten commandments when he looked on the tables of stone, so may the eyes of those that are around us, be able to *read Christ*, in our daily walk and conversation.

“ *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*” This is the *second state*. The divine life is viewed in near contact with the mortal body, and with all the infirmities and evils connected therewith. But no evil can ever touch the life of Christ in the soul. The more the vessel was troubled on every side, the more evident it became that the power of God was there. It rose above the working of death in the apostle, and triumphed over all the difficulties of his thorny path. “For we which live,” he says, “are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body.” This “dying daily” caused the *life of Jesus* to shine forth more brightly. Like Gideon’s pitchers, the light was manifested when the vessel was broken. But what experience ! What conflict ! What service ! His many and heavy afflictions he calls *light*, and but for a *moment*, in the view of that eternal weight of glory, which he saw before him. Encourage, Lord, and strengthen the hearts of Thy weak and sorrowing ones now, who come so far short of the example of Thy servant Paul.

We now come to the *third state*—the “*unclothed*” state—the one more immediately under our meditation. Paul was “*willing rather*” to be in this state ; although, at the same time, he saw in the Man Christ

glorified in heaven, the perfect, or resurrection state. This is the *fourth state*, when the person, complete, shall be glorified, after the image of Christ in glory. This was the grand object before the apostle's mind. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be *unclothed*, but *clothed upon*, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." See also Phil. iii.

The *fourth state* being connected with the Lord's coming, we have much more light and definite teaching on it, than on the intermediate state. Comparatively little is said on the *third*, or separate state of the soul. A veil, we doubt not, has been purposely drawn over it, so that it might not come between our hearts and our Lord's return. Had the soul's blessedness *with Jesus*, during the present period, been fully revealed, we might have been selfish enough to have thought so much about it, and to have longed so much after it, that the hope of His coming might have lost its proper place and power in our hearts. The Holy Ghost guards the hope of the Church on all sides, and with special care. But enough is revealed to satisfy the heart of faith, as to our dear departed ones. Further light is, in love, withheld. Meditate deeply, my soul, on what is revealed, and be subject thereto. And knowing the love of Jesus, and the unchangeableness of our divine life amidst all changes, the interpretation thereof will be easy.

"For me to live is Christ," says the apostle, "and to die is gain." This is a contrast. To live is Christ—to die would be a gain upon that. And, further, he adds, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a

desire to depart and to be *with Christ*; which is *far better*." "*With Christ*," would be his "*gain*." This would be "*far better*." But first of all, carefully note the blessedness of the state with which he contrasts departing "to be with Christ."

"For me to live is Christ." What nearness to Christ, what communion with Him, the servant must have that can say this! It includes the idea, first of all, of having Christ for his object, his motive, his joy, his strength; and, also, of great love for the Church, a deep and tender interest in all that concerned the name and glory of Christ, and the well-being of His people. "For me to live is Christ,"—is like the condensed energy of the Spirit, that would sum up all of that mighty heart, that bright light, that noble servant, in these few words. And now comes the important question—How much would such a one "gain" by death? He would be "WITH CHRIST"—in the enjoyment of Christ, personally, in heaven. And this is like the condensed energy of the Spirit as to the other side—the consummation of all blessedness—"with Christ." But would the soul not lose much of its interest in all these *lower things*, now that it has reached the *higher*? Most assuredly not! It has the higher things in addition. This is the point of great interest as to the "unclothed" state. We can never lose anything that we *now* have, in fellowship with Christ, because He is already risen and glorified. He is our life—that life has no trial to go through. It only loses in death the poor cumbersome body in which it groaned, being burdened. All that we now know, and enter into,

through the teaching of the Spirit, must abide for ever. We only lose that which belongs to the *first Adam*, but nothing of that which belongs to the *last Adam*. There is immense force in the apostle's words of contrast, *far better*—**FAR BETTER!** This would be true as to everything touching the soul's connection with the blessed Lord, both as to the *higher* and *lower* things.

It is no longer in *our power* to communicate to the dear departed soul that which we know would have given it joy here; but being present with the Lord, everything that is worthy of His love, and fitted to deepen the joy, and elevate the worship of the loved departed, we can happily trust *Him* to communicate. All is well! How well! "*Absent from the body, present with the Lord.*" How far the soul, apart from the body (its own proper instrument of expression), can express itself, we venture not to say, but in its bright consciousness, it remembers and loves. It thinks of the past and present, it anticipates the future. It waits in patience, with Christ, for the morning of the first resurrection; but its present and blessed feast is His unchanging, never-ending love.

"There are our loved ones in their rest:

They've crossed time's river; now no more

They heed the troubles on its breast,

Nor feel the storms that sweep its shore.

But 'there' pure love can live, can last;

They look for us their home to share:

When we, in turn, away have passed,

What joyful greetings wait us there—

Across the river!"

There is only one other passage I would refer to on this point. It has always been a favourite with the weary pilgrim. I mean the Lord's own words to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be WITH ME in paradise." The sweetness, the comfort, the rest of heart, which this assurance gives, is beyond all expression. There "with the Lord" and with loved ones who have gone before, the soul rests, clothed in light, and breathing the air of heaven. The mother has found her firstborn, long, long, gone before her, but never forgotten. And, oh! what a fresh spring to her worship! "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together," will now be their joyous song. And there, too, the husband meets the wife of his youth, who was early called, but whose hearts were formed to love, not only for time, but for eternity. True, human relationships will be unknown there, but *hearts* and *loves* remain for ever.

But lest we should anticipate the resurrection-state, we leave—oh most contentedly leave—our dear, our loved, our cherished, departed ones, "with the Lord," and with each other, in that blooming garden of heaven's choicest delights. Now, we often travel by faith, between the dark valley and that bright Eden above; but soon, soon, the Lord will come. Lord, Lord of that happy land, how soon?—when, oh when, shall the cloudless morning come? "A LITTLE WHILE," is the Master's own measure of His absence. Then, when that happy morning dawns, we, too, shall say *farewell* to this vale of tears. *Faith's* work shall then be done; "for we shall see him as he is." *Hope*, too, shall then be realized in the Person

of the Lord, as it is written, "And they shall see his face." These all-important companions of the valley are no more needed. Faith, so long accustomed to the flight, shall then, and for ever, "fold her wings." Farewell, "precious faith," but, oh, how much I owe thee! Hope, "blessed hope"—soul-sustaining hope, shall then be lost amid the glories of the Jerusalem above; but *love* remains; yes, love, eternal love prevails through all the ransomed throng.

But what, my soul, what of the poor body, that lies mouldering in the grave? The now humbled body, shall, ere long, share eternal glory with the soul. Scripture is plain on this point. But I will do little more than quote two or three passages.

"What! know ye not that your *body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Here, observe, the Holy Ghost has taken *possession* of the body. He has thus *appropriated* the body to God. Had the text said, "your *heart* is the temple of the Holy Ghost," the question of affection might have been raised; but it is your *body*—which plainly assures us that the body, living or dead, is in the custody of the Holy Ghost—that, henceforward, He is the custodian of the believer's body. Again, "But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your *mortal bodies* by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.) Here it is said not merely "your bodies," but "your *mortal* bodies," which meets the heart in sweetest grace. But what a volume of truth we have on this subject in 1 Cor. xv. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised

in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Need we anything more, O my soul, to set the heart of strongest affection at rest for ever! Let patience have her perfect work—the "little while" will soon be past. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"The resurrection-morn will break,
And every sleeping saint awake,
Brought forth in light again :
O morn, too bright for mortal eyes !
When all the ransomed Church shall rise.
And wing their way to yonder skies—
Called up with Christ to reign."

Ver. 5. "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" The bereaved and benighted pilgrim now enters a new path of experience. He is emerging from the thick darkness of the valley. Light from on high is breaking through the clouds, and scattering its beams over his path. He only begins to *realize* what has happened, and to find out where he is. The departure of his fellow-pilgrim is no dream of the night, but a stern reality under the hand of the Lord. It meets him everywhere and in every form. He has never been this lonely way before, but the footsteps of many are found here, and of *Him* who knows from experience every step of the

way, and how to succour those who are passing through these gloomy regions. Heb. ii, 17, 18.

Happy thought! The dark and dreary valley, with its days and nights of heaviness, introduce, in due time, the exhausted pilgrim to the rich provisions of the Shepherd's care, and to a more intimate acquaintance with Himself. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." He is still in the wilderness, and in the presence of his enemies, but divine refreshment is provided to strengthen him on his way, and in the presence of the Lord all enemies are powerless. Thus, the Good Shepherd, when the first heat of the trial is over, causeth His weary ones to sit down under His protection, and partake of the rich repast, which He has dressed with His own hands. Blessed Lord, what thoughtful love and tender care are Thine! In the day of nature's extreme weakness, when there is not so much strength left as to see a friend, far less to encounter a foe, thou thinkest of us, and carest for us. Others may upbraid, but Thou upbraidest not. Secured by Thy presence, we sit in safety at Thy table, feed on the bounties of Thy love, and are hidden, under the shadow of Thy wing, from the assaults of our enemies.

Sayest thou, my soul, canst thou say, as many, that such a repast—such an expression of the Lord's own deep sympathies—would amply repay all thy sore travel through the valley? I seek not so to balance things—I cannot—I dare not propose to my Lord another such a journey through the desert for anything. Still, if He leads the way, there must be un-

speakable blessedness to the soul in following Him. But there is no reason why the Christian should not be perfectly happy with the Lord, though in the depths of sorrow.

"The Lord is my shepherd," he may well say at all times, "I shall not want."

"Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom never faileth,
His sight is never dim;
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him."

But here it may be profitable to observe, in meditating on this new line of experience, that the good Shepherd is not now leading the soul beside the still waters and the green pastures. No, He has done so already. He is now leading the soul into further and higher truth, and into a path of richer experience. As the *babes*, in the second chapter of John's first epistle, know *Abba, Father*, and the *forgiveness of sins*, so the flock of the good Shepherd, in our beautiful psalm, start on their journey in the knowledge of Himself, and of what He is to them, and of His grace and love in their salvation. But, as we also read in the same chapter, of "young men and fathers," so here, some are led on to a more individual character of blessing. "Thou preparest a table before me . . . Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

For example; the woman who came to Jesus, in

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the house of Simon, under deep distress of soul about her sins, He introduced at once, we may say, to the green pastures and still waters. He met her heart's distress about sin with a *plenary* pardon—salvation and peace. He thus led her, without raising a single question as to the past or present, into the grace and love of His heart, and into the value and power of His cross. He made her, as it were, to lie down—to find perfect rest—in the green pastures, and beside the peaceful waters of His boundless mercy. Such is the Lord's way in grace with every soul that comes to Him; and such is the inalienable heritage of every sheep and lamb of His flock. As to these things, there is no difference between the babes, young men, and fathers. One may know them better than another, and enjoy them more than another, but they are the same to all. And observe, further, He never needs to repeat these precious sayings. The word has gone forth from His mouth, and "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." When He has said, "Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," these words *endure for ever*: just as the blood on the door-posts never was repeated.

"Blest Lamb of God, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till every ransomed saint of God
Be saved to sin no more."

Let us now turn, in further illustration of the truth before us, to the bereaved sisters of Bethany. They, too, were in great distress, but of a very different kind to hers who bathed His feet with tears. It was no question with Martha and Mary as to forgive-

ness and justification, but of needed consolation and strength, in the hour of their deep sorrow, and of nature's utter weakness. And, oh, what new treasures He opens out to them! The deep treasures of His love, tenderness, sympathies, power, and consolations. Oh, what sights they saw, what words they heard, and what blessings they received! "But for the death of their brother," as one has sweetly said, "they might never have seen the Redeemer's tears." But this was not all, though these tears must be the wonder of heaven, and the deepest consolation of His bereaved ones in all ages. They are embalmed in the heart of sorrow. But the mourning sisters were also privileged to see, not only the most touching expression of His manhood, but the crowning display of His Godhead. "Jesus wept"—"Lazarus, come forth." And it was to them, in their deep sorrow, that He revealed the blessed truth—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

What glory to God, may we not say—what a telling forth of what our Jesus is—what comfort for the mourner—what blessing to Mary, flowed from the death of Lazarus! In a high and blessed sense, the soul has only to do with the Lord Himself at such a time. Experience becomes more and more a personal thing. Now, it is not so much the language of the soul—what great things the Lord has *done* for me, as, what the Lord *Himself* is to me. Communion is not only a real but a personal thing. "*Thou* preparest a table before *me*." "*Thou*"—"me." And sweeter far

than tongue can speak, or pen can write, is the refreshment which the Lord provides at such times, It comes with the unmistakable impression of His own hand.

He who knows the end from the beginning, and sees what is coming, alone can make provision. Nothing takes Him by surprise. The cloud that has darkened the heavens and desolated the earth, He saw, before it was the size of a man's hand. It may have come upon the pilgrim suddenly, like a thunder-clap, so that, for the moment, he knew not where to look, what to say, or what to do. He was overwhelmed—his soul was sinking in deep waters. But there was one eye that saw what was coming, and prepared for it. And, oh, what a preparation is His! With wonder and amazement, the soul can only worship in the presence of a love that has thought of everything, and provided for everything, even to the least thing. Adorable Lord, what grace is Thine! what care for Thy people! But why wonder? No event, no circumstance in the event, could be too minute for Him who counts the hairs of our head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His providence.

Take an illustration from Scripture of His present watchful care over His people: an illustration, too, which is the result of His rejection on earth. (See Matt. xiv. 22, 36; also, Mark vi.; John vi.) "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away." It turned out to be a dark and stormy night, and, to outward appear-

ance, the disciples were left alone in the midst of the raging billows. "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary." But there was no Jesus in the ship with them—no blessed Master to compose their troubled minds, or encourage their drooping hearts. "And it was now dark, and Jesus was not there." Had the night been calm and clear, they would not have felt His absence in the same way. But now everything seemed against them. The troubled sea, the stormy wind, the darkness of the night, the difficulty in rowing, and the Lord's absence, made their position one of perplexity and distress. No doubt, they were ready to conclude, that, not only had their Master forsaken them, but that the elements had conspired against them.

But where is the Lord all this time, and whither has He gone? Has He ceased to care for His disciples? or, is He not aware of their distress? He has gone to the place of power, and that power He is using on their behalf. From the mountain, whither He had gone to pray, His all-seeing eye is following them unweariedly. Not a single wave has touched the vessel, without His measuring hand; and not a breath of wind, that He has not sent forth from its chambers. He is at the helm, we may say, both of the winds, the waves, and the vessel. His hand lays hold on everything—He rules over all. Never was He more near to His people, or they more dear to Him, than when they were passing through the storm, apparently alone.

The whole scene is a living picture, of the richest

instruction, and sweetest comfort, and of what has actually taken place. Personally, of course, the Lord and His disciples were apart, but in spirit and in power He was present with them. He permitted the storm to arise in His absence, for the trial of their faith. And who does not find it hard now, to pull against a strong head-wind? But so it is with the people of God in the present period. The world has crucified their Lord, and they have to cross the troubled sea of this life alone. The Church is as a widow, and desolate, so that she is to keep up the remembrance of her Lord's death, and her own identification with Him in it, according to His will, until He come. Her place of lonely widowhood is never to be forgotten. To deny it, would be to deny that her Lord was slain.

But let us return for a moment to the exquisite scene before us. Towards the close of that interesting day, the ancient prediction was fulfilled:—"I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." Thousands of the people were miraculously fed, and, as we read in John, they wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. But Jesus perceiving this, "departed again into a mountain, himself alone." The hour was not yet come for the crown of David to flourish on the head of his son and Lord. The people were in unbelief, and He would not be made a king to gratify their worldly desires. He departs from them, and goes up to a mountain to pray alone. He refuses to be king by the will of man, but He takes the place of priest before God. Blessed fruit of His rejection.

But here carefully observe, and mark well, O my soul, the hand of the Master in drawing this beautiful picture. Before He ascends up on high, He dismisses the multitude, or the unbelieving nation. Then He gathers His disciples, or the believing remnant, into a ship, and launches them on a tempestuous sea alone. And now, He goes Himself to a mountain to make intercession for them. "And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone." But during the long, dark night of His absence, His eye of love, which neither slumbers nor sleeps, followed His loved, though tossed and tried ones, all the way through the deep. O blessed Lord, what a night that was to Thee! Its silent watches must have pictured to Thy far-seeing eye these last eighteen hundred years and more. During the long, dark night of man's day, Thy beloved ones have had to meet an opposing current in this evil age, which is indeed hard to strive against. But the morning watch brings relief. This dark and dreary night, with its toiling and rowing, will soon be past. "Surely I come quickly," is the word of Jesus; and the Spirit speaks as if we could count on nothing more than "the twinkling of an eye," between us and the coming of the Lord.

"And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered

him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Peter may represent the Church. He leaves the position of the Jewish remnant, and goes out in faith to meet the Lord, without the support of nature. But he fails, as the Church has done; he fails, as she has done, through not keeping Christ and His word before him. He looked at the waves—the circumstances—in place of looking to the Lord. So long as Christ filled his eye, he imitated Him, and walked on the sea as He did. But the moment his eye is off Christ, and on the billows, he begins to sink. Faith can walk on rough waters as well as smooth, if the eye is kept on the Lord. The Lord had said, "Come," to Peter, and that was enough. He who created the elements, could make the sea a pavement for His servant. When Christ and His word are kept before the soul, we can walk on the rough sea of life, as well as on the smooth waters.

But, oh, gracious Lord, Thou art as ready to answer the cry of distress, as the voice of faith! But the honour that belongs to the walk of faith is lost.

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand,

and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." The Lord, in company with Peter, rejoins the disciples in the ship, and immediately the troubled waters are at rest. When the Lord and His heavenly Bride return to Israel, all their troubles and persecutions will be at an end. He will be owned and worshipped as their own Messiah, the son of David, the Son of God. "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." But the blessing flows out unto all the earth.

"And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they went out into that country, round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole." Here we have a bright millennial scene. The Lord is received joyfully. The place of His former humiliation and rejection is now the scene of His power and glory. He has come down from the place of His intercession. His ancient people, who were in deep waters, He immediately brings to a peaceful shore. In the world, which is filled with the works of Satan, He exercises His power in healing and blessing. He relieves a distressed and groaning creation. The trail of the serpent disappears, and joy and gladness, health and beauty, fill all lands. Hasten, O Lord, hasten in Thy time, that promised, coming, happy day.

But, meanwhile, may those who are *now* toiling

through the deep waters, in patience possess their souls. Surely, we know Thee better than did Thy disciples of old. Thy love has been fully manifested, and we know Thine unfailing intercession for us at God's right hand in heaven. The night may be dark, the billows high, the wind boisterous ; circumstances may be cheerless, joyless, and gloomy, but " the night is far spent, the day is at hand." " The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." " Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The tempest-tossed vessel will soon reach the shores of eternal rest, and be welcomed by many who have been safely landed there before. Till then, O most gracious Lord, may our hands be kept steady at the oars, and our hearts confiding in Thee, while we sleeplessly watch for the first radiance of the Morning Star.

" Go not far from me, O my strength,
Whom all my times obey.
Take from me anything thou wilt,
But go not *Thou* away.
So let the storm that bears me home,
Deal with me as it may.

" On Thy compassion I repose,
In weakness and distress ;
I will not ask for greater ease,
Lest I should love Thee less.
Oh ! 'tis a blessed thing for me,
To **NEED** Thy tenderness.

" Thy love hath many a hidden path,
No outward eye can trace ;
And, through the darkest night, my heart
Leaps to behold Thy face ;
And communes with Thee 'mid the storm,
As in a *quiet* place.

“ ‘ Deep unto deep ’ may call, but I
 With peaceful heart will say,
 Thy loving-kindness has a charge
 No wave can take away.
 So let the storm that speeds me home,
 Deal with me as it may.”

A. L. W.

“ *Thou anointest my head with oil.*” How sweetly conscious the pilgrim is of the Lord’s nearness to him! This is the strength of his heart. The honour conferred is great, and may be duly esteemed; but that which the heart loves most, is the presence of the Lord. Comparatively, it matters little who may be at a distance, or even opposed to us, when the Lord is near. In His presence we enjoy a rest from all that surrounds us, which we can find nowhere else, and which, we doubt not, partakes of the perfect rest above.

Is this, O my soul, thine own experience? Knowest thou the sweet peace and the quiet confidence which conscious nearness to the Lord gives? Surely, those who have experienced the power of that presence in days of weakness and trial, can never forget it. There is a way of learning such things, which neither time nor change of circumstances can efface, and which will be remembered with profit throughout eternity. But before the Lord teaches thus, the soul must be stripped of all self-dependence, and of everything that has its roots in nature. A destitution must be felt, that looks to the Lord alone, and welcomes the supplies as coming directly from Himself. Then, the arms that enfold the fainting one, the power that raises the stricken one, and the fulness that fills the

emptied one, must ever be remembered, and remembered with adoring gratitude.

But may not a soul enjoy great nearness to the Lord, without having passed through trial, or known much of the difficulties of this present life? These, most surely, form no ground, but are often the occasion, of great conscious nearness. It is the happy privilege of all who, through grace, believe, to enjoy spiritual nearness to God in Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is their birthright. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." We are not only pardoned, but reconciled. Though, strange to say, I have talked with many who knew their pardon, but were strangers to reconciliation. Such, of course, knew nothing of that personal nearness to Christ of which we are speaking. The sweet, happy, home feeling of reconciliation is unknown.

But why? it may be asked. Because the truth is not fully apprehended. And what is the truth? it may be further asked. As we are merely referring to the fact at present, we cannot go into the subject; but the reception of the prodigal son may be taken as an answer to the question, and as the divine illustration of the doctrine of reconciliation. The first thing the prodigal received from his father was the kiss of peace—of reconciliation. He is the living picture of a soul quickened, pardoned, sealed, accepted, reconciled, worshipping. Was there one in all the father's house that felt more at home than the prodigal? Not one. He was there in the full credit of Christ—radiant in His beauty—exalted in

His dignity, and adorned with the jewels of heaven. The Father in His love, we may say, knows not how much to make of him. But how few, alas, drink deeply at the fountain of the Father's love!—a love that is unchangeable, and that is infinitely above robes, and rings and fatted calves! O Father—Father of the Lord Jesus—give us to know more of the love that so receives and so welcomes every returning prodigal! O give us to taste of this perfect peace—this perfect reconciliation—this happy, joyous worship!

But may every truly converted sinner now read, in the prodigal's reception, the history of his own? He ought to. The Father is not changed. And he may also connect with the love that receives, the love that *seeks*. So that he ought to rejoice in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And with the additional light of the Epistles, we see even something more than in that ever fresh, ever precious fifteenth of Luke. The *new ground*,—namely, the death and resurrection of Christ, and His exaltation to the right hand of God,—is unfolded and expounded in the Epistles. This is the entirely new ground on which the believer is placed in *reconciliation* with God. Hence the doctrine so fully taught in the Epistles, of our *oneness* with Christ, as the risen and exalted Man in glory. There we read that the Christian is *in Christ Jesus—joined unto the Lord—seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. Rom. viii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 17; Eph. ii. 6.

But we return to the question of our experimental nearness to the Lord. True enough, it is

our blessed privilege to know our place of nearness to Him, spiritually, and His presence with us, at all times, and under all circumstances; but who can speak of it? Rather let us meditate on the experience of the man of faith, as recorded by the Holy Spirit. Much of the experience of this psalm will apply to Christ Himself, in His path down here, and to those, in all ages, who follow in His footsteps. It is the path of a godly man, under the eye and the unfailing care of Jehovah. There is suffering and humiliation, honour and glory, in the way. The former for a time, the latter for ever.

But however much the Lord may be known and enjoyed in the simplicity of faith, it was by the way of Marah's bitter waters, and the dark shadows of death, that our pilgrim reached the King's table, and became an honoured guest in His banqueting house. It is better that the sufferings should be first, and the glory after, than that the glory should be first, and the sufferings after.

While the pilgrim is still seated at the table which the Lord prepared for his refreshment, new honours and richer blessings await him. The host, we may say, according to Eastern custom, now rises from his seat, and pours the fragrant oil on the head of his guest. In oriental nations, this is esteemed a mark of the very highest honour, and is usually reserved for distinguished guests and strangers. The oil is mingled with the most costly perfumes, so that the banqueting hall is filled with its sweet odours. It is not unusual, on certain occasions, for the servant to anoint the head of each guest; but when the master

himself performs this service on some favoured one, what must *his* honour be! Yet faith can say of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, "Thou anointest my head with oil." No servant is employed on this occasion; the Royal Host takes the place of servant Himself.

It is quite evident, from what our Lord says in the house of Simon, that this custom prevailed amongst the Jews: "My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." What self-righteousness so ungraciously withheld, the poor penitent supplied. The Pharisee did not think He was worthy of a little water for His feet, far less the costly oil for His head. But who ever heard of self-righteousness having either oil for the head, water for the feet, or the kiss of gracious welcome for the lowly Son of man? But the humble penitent finds them all. The fountains of her heart are broken up to bathe His feet with tears. Like a man who once said to the writer, after the word had reached his heart, and who could scarcely speak from emotion, "I seem to have got a well in my heart, and it is constantly springing up to my head." This woman, too, found a well—a springing well in her heart; and also the means of finding the costly ointment, and every other tribute of respect for the Saviour of her soul. Oh, what a scene! what a lesson! A poor, fallen, degraded sinner—an outward breaker of the law, enters the abode of man's righteousness, bows at the feet of the Son of David, and carries off the blessing in the very face, and from the very centre of the Pharisee's vain glory. She is enriched

with the noblest prize that soul ever found, while the chiefs of the people, who refused to bow to Jesus, are left poor and miserable, and blind and naked. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The practice of anointing is frequently spoken of in Scripture. The holy oil was largely used in the Jewish worship. Their prophets, priests, and kings, were consecrated and inaugurated with it. It formed an important ingredient in the offerings; even the vessels of the tabernacle were to be anointed with the "holy anointing oil." As compounded according to Divine directions (Exod. xxx.), it was, no doubt, an expressive type of the Holy Spirit in His many and various operations; and its noiseless flow through the golden pipes (Zech. iv.) may represent His silent, unseen working in the soul.

But the anointing of the head, as in our beautiful psalm, is more the emblem of a personal blessing than of a ceremonial observance. The man of God in the beginning of the psalm, under the similitude of the sheep and its shepherd, speaks of his perfect confidence in Jehovah; and that confidence never fails him; it characterizes the psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." He is led forth by His shepherd's hand to the green pastures, and beside the still waters. But a day comes when a dark cloud passes over the whole scene. He goes through sorrow and suffering, though the hand that strikes be unseen. Death crosses his path and leaves its dark shadows behind. The once joyous, peaceful, happy scene is turned into a vale of tears. Still, the Lord

is there, and His presence is enjoyed. "Thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And now the figure is changed—changed from the emblem of a sheep confiding in a Shepherd, to an invited guest at the King's entertainment.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies ; thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over." The "table," may be the symbol of the soul's communion with the Lord Himself. It may be employed here to set forth a richer, fuller character of communion with Him. As He says elsewhere, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20.

The anointing of the head seems to partake more of an open, public expression of the Lord's favour ; and, in this distinguishing blessing, the anointed one is brought into blessed fellowship with the Master Himself. He was anointed, not with the oil of the sanctuary, but with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water ; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." (Matt. iii. 16.) We elsewhere read, that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power ;" and again, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Acts x. 38 ; Heb. i. 9.

Most marvellous, indeed, is the blessing to our

souls, that shines under the emblem of anointing. Here we are said to be the "*fellows*" of Christ; and as man, we know, He is addressed as the "*fellow*" of the Jehovah of hosts! (Zech. xiii.) What a link! thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul, what a link between us and the living God! It is also said of all Christians, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One;" and that, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." (1 John ii. 20; 2 Cor. i. 21.) True, most true, He is anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His "*fellows*;" still, we *are* His "*fellows*." The Spirit of truth affirms it, we believe it, and the day will declare it.

As the anointed kings and priests of our God and Father, we shall, ere long, be associated with our blessed Lord, in His dominion and glory. We shall then be the public companions of Him, under whose hand will be the whole government of the heavens and the earth. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. . . . They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. xx.) But let it not be thought that our reigning, or companionship with Christ, terminates with the thousand years. True, that will be the end of the time-period of the reign; and then Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. xv.) But our reigning with Christ will just be, as it were, commencing then; for we "*shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*" (Rom. v. 17.)

Our eternal life, and our reign with Christ, are co-equal.

Blessed Lord! what love! what a prospect! what can we say? O give us to walk worthy of the holy oil of our God that is upon us! Meantime, we can only worship and adore in the presence of such grace. In truth we may say, "*My cup runneth over.*"

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son:
When, to the time appointed, the rolling years have run,
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

* * * * *

"For Him shall praise unceasing, and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing—a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever, His great best name of love."

"*My cup runneth over.*" What a happy state to be in! The blessing of the King's guest is now *unmeasured*. He who was, a little while ago, amidst the deepest shades of the valley, is now in the scene of highest joy, and receiving the most public assurance of the Lord's favour. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the valley may be as strong an expression of the Lord's favour as the banquet, though the results in experience be so widely different. Now, the cup of joy is flowing over. But this joy is only in the Lord. The whole scene below may be as joyless as ever. These two things are perfectly consistent in Christian experience, and well known to many. Earth's scenes may henceforth be joyless, though full of mercies, while the heart is in the boundless joys of the Lord. Everything around may be tinged with

the dark shade of disappointment, bereavement, or with the most crushing, abiding trial; while all above is calm, cloudless, unmingled joy: standing before God in the full credit of Christ, and in the sweet confidence that we are the children whom He loves, the heart overflows with joyous praise.

This is the genuine fruit, O my soul, of being at the King's entertainment. But how could it be otherwise? Seated at the King's table—partaking of the repast which His own hand had dressed—the head anointed with the odoriferous oil—the cup filled to overflowing with the King's choicest wine; what else, tell me, could a soul say in such circumstances, than “my cup runneth over?”—my joy—my blessing—my happiness, is full—yea, more than full; I can only love and praise.

From this expressive image, thou mayest learn, O my soul, what *worship* is. And rest assured, that nothing is of more importance to the Christian, and nothing more honouring to God. He is robbed of His glory when His children fail to worship Him. The true principle and character of worship are seen here. How full and instructive is this remarkable Psalm! And in how many points it applies to the blessed Lord Himself. Oh! how full was His cup of joy, and of sorrow too, when down here as the dependent Man, confiding in Jehovah's care! But what wonderful experience for a sinner saved by grace to be able to say, when in deep, deep waters, “My cup of joy is full, my cup of sorrow too.” Such was always the portion of the Lord's cup, as the Man of Sorrows. But He knew both perfectly. What a

blessing to have fellowship with Him! What a privilege, however painful for the present, to taste His cup of sorrow, as well as His cup of joy—to know something of His earthly sorrows, and of His heavenly joys. Of the cup of wrath, which He drank for us, we can never taste: “It is finished;” it is drained to its dregs: but of His cup of joy we shall drink for ever; Hallelujah! “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” will be His welcome greeting by-and-by. Not merely, observe, my soul, into the joy of heaven, or of angels, but into the joy of thy Lord.

“Thou art my joy, Lord Jesus! Thou art my glorious sun!
In the light that shineth from Thee, I gladly journey on.
There is a hidden beauty, a healing, holy light,
In thy countenance, uplifted, upon the inward sight.

“Oh, purer than the morning, and brighter than the noon,
And sweeter than the evening, a thousand joys in one;
Thou Brightness of God’s glory, and Lord of all above,
Son of the Father’s bosom, and Image of His love.”

What, then, thou mayest still inquire, O my soul, is the spiritual meaning of this emblem? We believe it represents a soul in the true spirit and act of worshipping. We know no other four words in Scripture, which so emphatically express *the true idea of worship*.

The Master has so filled the vessel that it overflows. When the heart is filled with the truth, “as the truth is in Jesus,” and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it overflows in thanksgiving and praise—it worships God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. The heart of the guest, we may say, responds to the kindness of the Host. But, plainly, that which comes down from

God to the soul in grace, re-ascends from the soul to Him in grateful praise. Like the curling smoke from the golden altar, it ascends in the sweet odours of acceptable worship.

It is perfectly clear that a cup running over can hold no more; that which is poured in only increases its overflow. But what, may I ask, are the spiritual feelings of a soul that answers to this figure? They are heavenly in their character, and produced by the Holy Spirit. Nothing on earth comes so near the employment of heaven as worship. It will be our happy employment throughout eternity. But the soul must, in spirit, be in heaven—in the holy of holies—before it reaches this condition; and that is where the Christian should always be. He is in Christ, and Christ fills all heaven with His glory. In God's account there is no outer-court worship now; it must be priestly, and inside the veil. When the heart of the worshipper answers to the overflowing cup, it is evidently completely filled up—not a corner is left empty. This is the main thought. It feels, spiritually, that every wish is met—every desire is satisfied, and all the longings of the soul perfectly answered. True, the worshipper is not yet in resurrection glory, but he knows and feels that he has everything excepting glory. *That* he waits for, but not uncertainly. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. v. 5.) The *hope* which properly belongs to righteousness is *glory*. We have the righteousness now, in Christ; we wait for the glory. And yet, in another sense, we have the glory too, as the Lord Himself says,

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” And even in a still closer way we may say that we have it now, according to what the apostle says to the Colossians: “Which is Christ *in you*, the hope of glory.” Here it may be said that we are already *linked* with the glory. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” But we wait for the glory of God in *full manifestation*.

It may be well to notice the difference between *prayer* and *worship*, however nearly allied they may be to each other, and even suitably mingled together, as “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks.” We have always much to be thankful for; still, the two things, in themselves, are quite distinct. We bring our *empty* cups to the prayer-meeting, and beg and beseech our God and Father to fill them. This shows our knowledge of God, and our confidence in Him; and if we pray in faith, the oil may flow until every vessel is filled. (2 Kings iv.) Thus, prayer may lead to worship, as preaching the gospel to the world, and teaching God’s people, may do. Nevertheless, it is well to understand the difference between prayer, preaching, teaching, and worship. They are each most important in themselves, and all of God, and ought not to be confounded. In the preaching of the gospel, God is addressing the world; in teaching, He is speaking to His saints; but in worship we address God, we render adoration to Him. Ministry is from God to man, worship is from man to God. Hardly any two things could be more distinct, and yet the distinction is rarely seen. True worship may be produced by

any of the three named services, and even a spirit of worship may be enjoyed when engaged in them, and so much the better when it is so; but in Christian worship we draw near to God as our Father in Christ Jesus, and address ourselves to Him. When we know God as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of Christ, we have holy liberty in His presence, and render the praise, adoration, and thanksgiving of an overflowing heart.

The term "cup" is frequently and variously used in Scripture: sometimes it is the symbol of joy, and sometimes of sorrow; but, in the verse before us, the "cup running over" is the expression of overflowing joy, and is in full harmony with the position of the anointed believer. The table which Jehovah had prepared for His weary pilgrim, more than supplied all his need. Nothing was wanting. The provision was full, and Divinely suited to his condition. There was no need to remind the Host of something that had been forgotten. Asking for this, or for that, at such a table, would be contrary to every feeling of the satisfied guest; unless it were, in heart, for more gratitude, more suited thanksgiving. Ought we not to be filled with this spirit when at the Lord's Supper? Most surely, and in the highest sense. May we not, at least, say, that in this beautiful verse we have an *illustration* of the Lord's Supper, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the worship of the assembly of God? Surely we may; for the idea of worship is more in connection with the assembly than with a single Christian. The joy of others increases our joy, and strengthens our worship.

This truth is so beautifully and touchingly set before us in Deuteronomy xxvi., that we must notice it. The worshipper, already in the land promised to the fathers, brings his basket of first-fruits—the growth of the Holy Land—and the priest presents it before the Lord his God. He worships *in the land*, and only presents to Jehovah *the fruits of the land*. Canaan is the type of heaven, and we can only worship God, when there, in spirit, and with the growth of that happy land. Love, joy, holiness, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving grow abundantly in our heavenly Canaan. But the joy of the redeemed Israelite in the land was shared with others. He did not forget his own once miserable condition in the land of Egypt, though now redeemed out of it. “A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt.” In his new joy, he invites the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow to share his abundance. But this was not all; he maintained a walk of practical holiness, without which there can be no worship. “I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away aught thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead; but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.” And now, in the largeness of his heart, he embraces all Israel. “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers; a land that floweth with milk and honey.” True benevolence, largeness of heart, is sure to accompany a spirit of heavenly worship. “By him

therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

The sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the breaking of bread, is the only *foundation* of true worship; and the Holy Spirit, present in the assembly, is the alone *power* by which God can be worshipped acceptably. It would be the most daring presumption for any one to draw near to God as a worshipper, unless he knew that all his guilt was removed, and that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus. But when we know that the blessed Lord, by the blood of His cross, has fully glorified God, blotted out all our sins, and cleansed us from all defilement, we have holy boldness to draw near to God as our Father. But for the cross, all must be judgment; but by means of the cross, all is grace, boundless grace. The rending of the veil from the top to the bottom, is the Divine witness to us, that Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and opened up the way for us into the holiest of all. In virtue of His atoning sacrifice, there is now, glory be to God, no question of sin between the worshipper and God. That question was fully gone into on the cross, and there settled—there closed for ever. The same stroke, which slew the Lamb, rent the veil, and laid open the way into the presence of infinite holiness, where the worshipper now stands without spot, and rejoices before the Lord his God.

Still meditate, O my soul, for the deepening and

the elevating of Thy worship, on that wondrous cross—the great centre of God's moral universe! To this centre God ever pointed, and the eye of faith ever looked forward, until the Saviour came. And now we must ever turn to that cross as the centre of all our blessing, and the basis of all our worship, both on earth and in heaven—in time and throughout all eternity. The “new song” never could have been sung in heaven, and no hymn of praise could ever have been sung on earth, by fallen man, but for the cross of Jesus; and, but for that same cross, ours must have been for ever a cup of trembling, in place of an overflowing cup of rejoicing.

“O what a debt I owe to Him who shed His blood,
And cleansed my soul, and gave me power to stand before His
God.

Saviour and Lord! I own the riches of Thy grace;
For I can call Thy God, my God—can bow before His face:
Thy heavenly Father, too, I worship as my own,
Who gave with Thee the Spirit's cry, to me, a son foreknown.”

Having briefly dwelt in our meditations on the only *foundation* of worship—the sacrifice of Christ; we will now refer to the only *power* of worship—the Holy Spirit. When “born again” we receive a new nature, which is holy and suited to the presence of God. It is also capable of enjoying Him, which truth surely gives us the highest thought of creature-happiness; and yet, as the apostle says, that blessed state may be enjoyed even now. “But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. v. 11.) Without this new nature there could be no worship. It is the *children* that the Father

seeks to worship Him. Sonship is essential to worship. But the Father delights in the worship of His children. Not only does He accept it, but He *seeks it*. Wondrous, gracious truth, O my soul! our God and Father *seeking* worshippers! "For the Father seeketh such to worship him."

But, besides the accomplished work of redemption, the new birth, and our union with the risen Christ, the *gift of the Holy Spirit* is indispensable to Christian worship. Nothing can be plainer than our Lord's own teaching to the woman of Samaria on this subject. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Here our Lord insists on the moral necessity of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in Christian worship. And surely He knows best what suits the Father, from whose bosom He came, and even then He was "in the bosom of the Father." (John i. 18.) It is by the Spirit, though children of God, that we understand, enjoy, and worship Him. God being a Spirit, He must be worshipped in His own nature—"in spirit." A son is the same nature as his father.

As children, we are feeble and dependent, but we are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." As children, we are ignorant and foolish, but the Holy Spirit communicates to us the mind of God, and gives us an understanding in Divine things, so that we can draw near to Him in

thought and feeling suited to His holy presence. It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, that gives us the *consciousness* of our oneness with Christ, and our nearness to God. He is the seal of redemption, and the earnest of the inheritance. The anointing of the head with oil is like "*the unction*" that we receive of God, whereby we may know all things. (See 1 John ii. 20; 1 Cor. ii. 12.) And it is by the same Spirit, that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. v. 5), which love, we may say, is the source of all our blessing, and the spring of all our worship. If, then, the Holy Spirit be thus absolutely necessary to the worship of Christians, surely it becomes a matter of first importance, that He should have His right place in the assemblies of the saints. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) How can we render to God the glory due unto His name, if the Spirit, by any means, be quenched, or practically displaced? This is a solemn question. Would not the contrast, so strongly drawn by the apostle, be in some way applicable in such a case? "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3.

Here, it is not the *sin* of the flesh, but the *religion* of the flesh, which the apostle warns against. In God's sight the one is as bad as the other. The true worshippers are known by worshipping God in the Spirit, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. The flesh can be very pious in its own way, and can be largely

occupied with good works ; but it will never “rejoice in Christ Jesus.” It knows nothing of Christ as despised on earth, and honoured in heaven ; nor of setting our affections on things above. But even when Christ has His right place in the heart, and the Holy Spirit is owned as the alone power of worship, we have need to watch against mingling the thoughts of the flesh with the guidance of the Spirit. It will be the constant aim of the enemy, where he cannot substitute flesh for spirit, to mingle the two.

One solemn question—one grand test, remains for each—for all : *Do I rejoice in Christ Jesus alone ?* This is the true standard to judge by—the touchstone of spiritual worship. Answerest thou, O my soul, to this standard ? Is Christ thy all in all ? Comest thou before God—standest thou in His holy presence—*rejoicing in Christ Jesus alone ?* He is the delight of the Father’s heart,—the object of the Spirit’s testimony,—the joy and glory of His people. Happy, thrice happy they, who, in this day of wide-spread fleshly pietism, “worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

“O God, we come with singing, because Thy great High-Priest
Our names to Thee is bringing, nor e’er forgets the least :
For us He wears the mitre, where ‘Holiness’ shines bright ;
For us His robes are whiter than heaven’s unsullied light.”

It may be well, before closing our meditations on the cup of joy, to dwell a little on its contrast, *the cup of sorrow*. In the saint’s experience, the latter often goes before and accompanies the former. The one being *natural*, and the other *spiritual*, both may

be full at the same time. It is only while in the body and on the earth that we can meet with the cup of sorrow. It will be unmingled joy in heaven. There, we shall be met at the threshold with, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then we shall drink, and drink for ever, of the Master's own cup. We shall drink from the same fountain as Christ Himself. Having the same life, we shall have the same relish for the joys, the employment, and the blessedness of heaven; though not, of course, to the same degree.

Without this Divine nature there can be no relish for Divine things. To mere human nature the light of heaven would be more intolerable than the darkness of hell. Oh, what a thought! An immortal soul so driven to despair, through a sense of guilt in the presence of holiness, as to seek a shelter in the depths of darkness—as to cry "to the mountains and rocks, *Fall on us*, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi. 16.) But even now, when the gospel of God's grace is preached to sinners, it is said of such, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John iii. 19.) O that all such might be induced *now* to come to the light—the light of eternal love—the light of the cross of Jesus,—the light of the boundless grace of God! Come, O sinner, come! Better far be revealed now in the light of the glorious gospel, where all is grace and love,—where thy many sins can be pardoned, and where eternal life is received as the gift of God, than be revealed before the face of the

Judge, when the door of mercy is closed. Why not come? Is there not a terrible sting in sin, even now, when the pleasure of it is past? Hast thou not tasted this, O my fellow-sinner? How many are maddened to deeds of violence, through the remorse and bitterness of sin, when the pleasure that led on to it is turned into gall and wormwood! But what must its bitterness be in that place where hopeless despair seizes the soul in all its dread reality? There nothing but the sin and the sting remain, with the fearful conviction that no relief can ever come.

Why not then, my fellow-sinner, be entreated to come to Jesus now,—just now? If so guilty, so far down in the social scale, that thou art ashamed of thyself in the presence of others,—yet thou mayest freely, trustingly, come to Jesus. Thou wilt be welcome there. And rest assured of a present pardon, salvation, and acceptance, through His precious blood. Such was the experience of the woman that was a sinner, and of the penitent thief on the cross; and such may be thine. He who died on the cross for thee and me, is surely fit to be trusted. And say, would He have died for us if He had not loved us? Oh! lift thine eyes to that cross, and see His unquenchable love bleeding there! Seekest thou another sign save the sign of the cross? God forbid! The great reality in the universe is the love of Jesus! Heaven, earth, and hell, for a time, were all against the sinner's Substitute. All refuge failed Him. (Ps. cxlii. 4.) But then it was that His love burst forth through every weight and pressure, in all its native strength and glory. Many waters could not quench His love, no

floods could drown it; though He could say, in spirit, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depths closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head." (Jonah ii. 5.) Again and again, we would ask thee, Wilt thou, dost thou value the love that willingly passed through all this suffering for the chief of sinners? And with what end in view, thinkest thou? That they might one day share with Him His throne in glory. Do lean all thy weight on Jesus,—trust all to Him. His eye can never grow dim,—His arm can never become feeble,—His heart can never turn cold. For time and for eternity, thou art only safe and happy in trusting Him.

But see, O my soul, how far thou hast wandered from the footsteps of the flock,—from their joys and sorrows. Well, be it so. The Good Shepherd was content to leave the ninety-and-nine that were secure, and go far into the wilderness after a single lost sheep, and seek until He found it.

We were speaking of the twofold aspect of the Christian's experience: the cup of natural sorrow, and the cup of spiritual joy. He may know, at times, what it is to have both cups filled to overflowing. The poor human heart may be so broken with sorrow that it cannot look up; strength, motive, object, as to this life, may be gone. At such a moment, he feels a pressure as if he were down and could never rise up again. And surely, but for the Lord's helping hand, he must have gone a step beyond the rallying point. Such is the crushing, exhausting weight of human sorrow,—and such the Lord's loved ones may be al-

lowed to experience. The blessed Lord Himself, as the Man of sorrows, had deeper experience therein than any of His people ever can have. And now as the living Head, and great High-Priest of His people, He knows how to succour and raise up the sorrow-stricken soul.

Just at this point, the Lord may so reveal Himself to the soul, as to draw the eye away from its own sorrow, and turn aside the keen edge of its anguish. Not that the trial is removed or less; nay, it may be deepening, and that which is dreaded may be unmistakably drawing near. But the soul, we may say, is now in two regions, two states of being: in nature, amidst the desolations of earth; in faith, amidst the unchangeable realities of heaven. Both are real; but the spiritual joy changes the character of the earthly sorrow, and strengthens to bear it. Quietness of soul being restored, it now remembers that the happy soul is only called up to wait with the Lord, and to enjoy a quiet time with Him, before the public display of His glory. But, oh! what experience; and how real! To have poured out, at the same moment, a full cup of joy, and a full cup of sorrow, too! The latter, we know, shall ere long be clean forgotten; but the former will be remembered throughout eternity, as one of the strongest, sweetest expressions of the Saviour's compassion, love, and tender sympathy.

In Rom. v. 1—11 we have this line of Christian experience clearly set before us. It may be profitable to glance at it for a moment. To have a personal and spiritual acquaintance with these eleven verses, is a rich inheritance to the soul. "Therefore, being

justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In these two verses, the full blessing of the soul, with reference to the past, present, and the future, is summed up. The work of Christ is the basis of it all. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

As to the *past*, in the case of every believer, all is blotted out,—all connected with the old man came to its end, in God's sight, on the cross. Both the root and fruit of sin were judged there. All that needed putting away, was put away, according to the claims of God's glory and the sinner's need. Hence, the Christian is now one with Christ in resurrection. Death, judgment, the world, sin, and Satan, are behind him. On this ground, the ground of death and resurrection, there is perfect peace for the Christian, peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." As to the *present*, we are introduced to the full favour of God. Our standing is in grace. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." And as to the *future*, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are placed between the cross and the crown; our yesterday was Calvary, our to-morrow is glory.

This is true Christian *condition*; not *experience*, but *faith*. Being justified, having peace, standing in grace, waiting for glory. Experience flows from this condition. The Spirit of God having conducted the Christian to the very height of his condition, as a new man in Christ, and even given him a glimpse of

the glory behind the veil, He brings him back, as it were, to taste, in experience, the trials of this life. Still he can glory. He glories in the depths as well as on the heights. None can glory in tribulation as those who are rejoicing in the immediate hope of the glory of God. So it was with the great apostle, who was "caught up into the third heavens." There he found Christ as the only ground of his glorying; but when down here again, and in tribulation, through "a thorn in the flesh," he found the same Christ in the depths with him. "Most gladly therefore," he exclaims, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And such experience we also find in the eleven verses before us. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Thus the wheels of his soul are set in motion, and, through deep exercise, he again, we may say, reaches the heights. He has now the blessed enjoyment of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. What a blessed state of soul to be in, though under the very shadow of death! But this is not all; he has more to learn in this vale of tears, he must go through another kind of experience. The Christian is again brought back, not to the lesson of tribulation, but to an experimental acquaintance with the depths of his moral ruin. What he was, as *without strength, help, and without law*, a sinner, and an enemy, he is now taught;

but he learns these humiliating truths in the light of God's perfect love, and the Saviour's perfect work, and the Holy Spirit's presence. And mark now, O my soul, the point he reaches by this process ; higher he can never be raised. " But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Surely joying in God Himself surpasses all our enjoyment of the things He gives.

Well mayest thou wonder, O my soul, at what may be known, experienced, and enjoyed by the poor pilgrim saint in the wilderness. In the eyes of men He may appear a heartless, soulless, joyless, undefinable inhabitant of earth. But oh, what depths he penetrates ! what heights he scales ! what sights he sees ! what power he commands, and what glory gilds his path ! With him, it is glory on the threshold of heaven, and glory in the valley of humiliation. He knows the history of the future better than the past, and Divine light sheds its rays on the present. Ah ! poor, blind, dead world, thou knowest not this mysterious man ! Oh, that thou wouldst but come to Him who is the light of life and the light of men ! Grace has no evil eye ; what it has it longs for thee to share. It preaches, prays, watches, that thou mayest know and love the only Friend of sinners. Were one candle to light a dozen, its own light would be undiminished, but the united light would be far greater. Now, just now, cast in thy lot with those who are walking in the light of the Lord ; and may thine own path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

VER. 6. *" Surely goodness and mercy shall follow*

me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." We have just seen, that in the riches of Christian experience, the pilgrim saint becomes intimately acquainted both with joy and sorrow. This we have been taught, both in the school of God, and by His written word.

And here I would have Thee carefully note, O my soul, in Thy meditations, that the pilgrim is now seen, not, as it were, with a cup in each hand, but with a guardian angel on each side. "Surely," he says, "*goodness and mercy* shall follow me all the days of my life." And mark well the first word He utters, in thus bursting forth of His heart's fulness ; "Surely." Is not this an appropriate, a triumphant note of faith, after such deep and varied experience ? There are no doubts, no fears, no uncertainty here. A quiet, happy confidence fills the soul ; it is the full assurance of faith. It reminds one of the last words that the blessed Lord dropped into the ear of His Bride before He went away. "Surely," He says, "*Surely* I come quickly." Oh that it had dropped into her heart, and maintained its right place there, until His return ! The word of the Lord in the heart, and the person of the Lord before the mind, will alone give the experience, faith, and victory of the Twenty-third Psalm.

How conscious the man of God is, as He journeys along, of the dignity of his companions. He is accompanied with royal honours. Not indeed like earth's mighty ones, with steel-clad attendants, which dazzle the human eye ; but with the *goodness* and *mercy* of the living God. Such, we may say, is the

pilgrim's body-guard as he journeys through the wilderness. And when faith has said this, what more can it say? Could heaven itself furnish more suitable companions for this chequered scene? Impossible! They are ever in attendance, always ready, equal to every emergency, more than a match for every foe; they are noble, high-born, invincible; yet gentle and kindly as the pure love of heaven. And this is no fancy picture; nothing can be more real to faith. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Do think of this, O my soul; here pause a little; meditate; let thy thoughts dwell on this blessed truth. Beware of thinking too much of thine own condition—thine own circumstances; but think rather, of thine heavenly attendants, "goodness and mercy:" and still more, think of Him who sends them, and for so long a time—"All the days of thy life." Canst thou speak any more of feeling, as it were, alone in this world? Faith sees these messengers of love sent down from heaven, to guard and follow thee all thy pilgrim days. But why, it may be asked, fix on *goodness and mercy*? Because, "goodness" meets all our need; and "mercy" forgives all our faults. It is only with such that we can get along. The Good Shepherd has trod the sheep's path Himself, and He knows best what they need: not that He needed, in all respects, what we need; no, He was "without sin." But, as a man, He has walked the path, under Jehovah's care, along which His sheep and lambs are now passing. He goes before His flock; they follow Him.

There are three things connected with the Lord our Shepherd, which all the sheep of His pasture should know well. 1. He has gone through, in experience, the bitterest trials of the wilderness; so that He knows every step, every difficulty, every danger of the way, from having walked it Himself. 2. He died for the sheep. Having first gone over their path, He laid down His life for them. 3. He arose again from the dead to fold, watch over, and nourish the flock for which He died. Thus He is qualified in every way to be the Shepherd of God's sheep. Hence the beautiful doxology, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

In this beautiful sixth and closing verse, our pilgrim, whom we have followed so far and so closely both in his joys and in his sorrows, may be said to have reached a moral eminence, from which he surveys the past, the present, and the future. He is placed, as it were, at the centre of a circle. If we speak of Christian position, the Christian, we know, is in Christ, and He is the centre of all blessing and glory. And here, in this privileged place, the believer speaks only of *goodness* and *mercy* as to the whole of his wilderness life. He knows what joys and sorrows are. His experience has been great. He knows the green pastures and the quiet waters. He has tasted,

too, the bitter waters of Marah, and waded through their depths. The shadows of death have darkened his path, and spread their gloom over everything in the valley. And he knows, too, the rich provisions of the King's table—the royal banquet—the anointed head, and the overflowing cup. Nevertheless, in reviewing the past, in surveying the present, he can truly say, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." And in looking on to the future, the affection of the child, the love of home, can only see a Father's house: "*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"

" Goodness and mercy all my life

Shall surely follow me :

And in God's house for evermore

My dwelling-place shall be."

Our fellow-pilgrim, with whom we must soon part, is now calmly and triumphantly anticipating his last change. His heart, with the prospect, overflows with joy and praise. All is bright ; but the looked-for hour of his departure is the brightest of all, and certainly must be the happiest. Thus should it be with all Christians, and especially with those who have been taught of God, "TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN." This is the true hope of the Church ; not death, though that may take place before the Lord comes. When the great truth of the Lord's second coming has its right place in the heart, the desire to depart becomes more the power of affection, than the bare belief of a doctrine. The Lord Himself, personally, is known and loved ; and the heart longs to be with Him. It matters little

whether the way be through the portals of death, or, with all saints, rapt in clouds, to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10, iv. 13—18.) Those who are taken home before the rapture, have the advantage of knowing the Lord in that separate state. This will be additional and precious experience.

The position of the waiting Christian in this world, may be one of great interest and usefulness; and the ties that bind him to it may be many and tender; still, when the eye of faith looks across the boundary line, and sees *who* are there, and *what* is there, the heart instinctively longs to join the happy throng. The loved one, or the many loved ones who have gone before, are especially thought of, though, there, the joy of each will be the joy of all. True, there will be *individuality*—perfect identity, but a perfect blessedness common to all.

“We look to meet our brethren
From every distant shore;—
Not one shall seem a stranger,
Though never seen before:
With angel hosts attending,
In myriads through the sky;—
Yet 'midst them all, Thou only,
O Lord, wilt fix the eye.”

And what grace, we may say, notwithstanding all our murmurings, to make the closing scene of our wilderness journey, the happiest, the calmest, and the brightest! Here the soul is near the Lord, and grace shines—faith triumphs—glory dawns—and praise abounds. Placed, as it were, on the margin of the two worlds, and seeing everything in the light of

God's presence, divine goodness—unmixed goodness, crowns the whole path. Even as to his darkest earthly days, the pilgrim can see nothing now but the goodness and mercy of God. Everything is now lost sight of, but the constant, unfailing care of the Lord our Shepherd. He speaks only of the goodness that so wonderfully met all his daily need, and of the mercy that met all his daily failure.

But now the end comes—the scene closes—the Father's house is full in view. One eye alone is bright in that social circle—one heart alone is rejoicing. "*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" As one not long ago said to a tender-hearted parent, who was greatly overcome with what seemed a last farewell: "Father—can't you—spare me?—I am only—going to Jesus—and you—shall soon follow." Such were the soothing and remarkable words of a dear daughter who had reached the interesting age of nineteen, to an affectionate father. But who was calm—who was bright, in that touching scene? She only; and many other similar words she said, but these were uttered with a look of tender sympathy for her dear father, as she observed him sink down in his chair to give vent to a flood of tears. She now sought to comfort him who had so often read and prayed by her bedside. What grace from God! What mercy to a father—to a family! His be all the praise. It is but the deep, tender sympathy of the Good Shepherd, as He folds the lamb in His bosom.

And now, after many an hour's meditation with deep and mingled feelings over our beautiful Twenty-

third Psalm, we must leave it for other themes ; but its lessons, in connection with a Father's hand, remain. He can engrave on the tablets of the heart, that which the wasting hand of time can never efface. The recollections of the past may draw a shade over the present, but the future is all, and only bright. The great thought in the closing words of the psalm is *home*. All the vicissitudes of the wilderness are over ; and the only thought that now fills the mind is *home*—an eternal, happy home. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." There, the worn and weary pilgrim finds his perfect rest ; there, the one who was a stranger on earth, finds his heavenly home ; and there, the servant whose work is finished, enters into the joy of his Lord.

" There at our Saviour's side,
In heaven our home,
We shall be glorified ;
Heaven is our home !
There with the good and blest,
Those we love most and best,
We shall for ever rest,
In heaven our home ! " .

The Lord grant, that both reader and writer may, in due time, reach that happy home ! Of all thoughts—of all words, what can be sweeter to the heart than "Home, sweet home" ? especially as it is presented to us by the Divine Bridegroom Himself in John xiv., "In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself,

that where I am, there ye may be also." And now, even now, may all who have followed us in our studies through the Psalm, be able, in blessed experience, to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

THE CHRISTIAN AT HOME.

"Thou'rt gone up above to the mansions of glory,
Thy Saviour's loved voice has welcomed thee in;
No more the broad shadows that darkened earth's story,
Shall sadden thy spirit with sorrow or sin.

"Thou'rt gone up to swell the glad song of salvation
And praise to Jehovah, whose nature is love :
Ah ! many a friend hast thou met, and relation,
Inhabitants long of the regions above.)

"No longer thy harp is unstrung on the willow :
Earth passed—heaven gained—never more wilt thou weep.
Into silvery ripples hath glided each billow,
The 'arms everlasting,' our loved one now keep.

"Thine eyes are beholding the King in His beauty ;
Thine ears are attuned to new songs of renown ;
Thy one great delight is His will and His glory ;
He carried *thy* sorrows, thou wearest *His* crown."



The following pieces may be called *consolatory poetry*, and will be found in keeping with the tone of "MEDITATIONS ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM." A sorrowing or an ailing one may sometimes find a little refreshment from a few verses of poetry, when unable to read anything more solid. It is mainly for the sake of such that the few following pieces are introduced. May the Lord accompany with His blessing all parts of the volume, and to His name be all the praise. Amen.]

THE PARTING.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."
 "Lo! I am with you alway."

It came—the parting ;
 And our weary hearts
 Fell torn and bleeding at the feet
 Of One who knew each pang :
 His name—"The Man of Sorrows."
 No stranger He to grief; for once,
 Alone, despised, forsaken e'en of God,
 His heart, divine, yet human, bore the load
 Of all creation's misery!
 Man's hatred too—He bore it all,
 And yet loved on !
 And now we needed not to call, for He
 Had watched each moment of our fleeting joy
 With tenderest sympathy. His ear
 Had caught the "farewell" which the lips
 Refused to utter, and His heart
 O'erflowed with love—with yearning, pitying love.
 His arms He clasped around us, and our heads
 Cradled upon His breast; while to each weary child
 Spake He of *rest*. And from those lips
 Dropped on each wounded heart the fragrant mirth,
 Soothing—restoring.*
 Sweet was that hour of peace !
 Deep as the ocean calm, when the waves are still'd,

* Canticles v. 13.

When the wild winds sink to rest,
 And the last thunder-roll dies murmuring away,
 And faint grows the note of the storm-bird's cry
 As she seeks her lonely nest.
 But stealing—slowly stealing along the eastern sky,
 Are streaks of glory—harbingers of morn,
 Telling of coming radiance—of a cloudless day.
 So stealing—sweetly stealing upon the wondering soul,
 Came visions of His glory, of joys before unknown.
 And on each list'ning ear fell there a sound
 Of words most sweet, speaking of love
 Which could not change, of hope which fadeth not,
 Of meetings in a land where partings come not
 And only joy is known.

* * * * *

So *He* spake peace! And from each heart
 Burst forth a song of praise; We could not grieve;
 Each aching void was filled—for *He* was ours
 And was not *He* enough?

E. C. L.

THE JEWEL RE-SET.

Can the jewel e'er regret
 Her rock-bound prison home, when set
 In gold and brilliants richly met?

Such our love's jewel! rich and bright
 In Heaven's fair setting; in His light,
 Who fashioned it for His own sight.

The tie He wove from nature's loom
 Hath linked us in that training room
 Where links are forged that mock the tomb.

Yes ; links of gold without alloy,
Which time nor death can e'er destroy,
From Him, our life, our common joy.

What music in that holy sphere,
Like that which had its key-note here;
Which 'mid earth's din, beats soft and clear?

And such was ours,—such will it be,
Eternal music! For 'tis *He*
Whose master-hand hath set the key.

From "THE WIDOW'S MITE."

"BE STILL, MY SOUL."

Be still, my soul ; the Lord is on thy side ;
Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain ;
Leave to thy God to order and provide ;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul ; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul ; thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past ;
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake ;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul ; the waves and winds still know
His voice, who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul ; when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul ; thy Jesus can repay
From His own fulness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul ; the hour is hastening on
 When we shall be for ever with the Lord ;
 When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
 Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
 Be still, my soul ; when change and tears are past,
 All safe and blessèd we shall meet at last.

Be still, my soul ; begin the song of praise
 On earth, believing, to thy Lord on high ;
 Acknowledge Him in all thy works and ways ;
 So shall He view thee with a well-pleased eye.
 Be still, my soul ; the Sun of life Divine
 Through passing clouds shall but more brightly shine.

Hymns from the Land of Luther.

ABIDE WITH ME.

The following verses, so full of deep feeling, were written, it is said, by a Missionary, immediately after the death of his beloved wife. In a foreign land, surrounded by strangers, and feeling the desolateness of his condition, he thus poured out his heart to the God of all consolation.

Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide ;
 The darkness thickens ; Lord, with me abide.
 When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
 Help of the helpless, oh ! abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day ;
 Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away ;
 Change and decay in all around I see :
 O Thou who changest not, abide with me !

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word ;
 But as Thou dwelt with Thy disciples, Lord—
 Familiar, condescending, patient, free,
 Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour—
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
 Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
 Through cloud and sunshine, oh! abide with me.

I fear no woe, with Thee at hand to bless;
 Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness:
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
 I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!

Reveal Thyself before my closing eyes;
 Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
 Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee:
 In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

And when my soul, released from earth, shall soar
 To realms of bliss, where I shall weep no more,
 Oh! wondrous thought! oh! glorious ecstasy!
 For ever, Lord, shall I abide with *Thee*!

THY WILL IS GOOD.

I bow me to Thy will, O God!
 And all Thy ways adore;
 And every day I live, I'd seek
 To please Thee more and more.

Thy will the end, the blessed rule
 Of Jesu's toils and tears;
 Thy will the passion of His heart,
 Those three-and-thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul
 A special love to Thee,
 A love to lose my will in Thine,
 And by that loss be free.

I love to kiss each print where Christ
Did set His pilgrim feet ;
Nor can I fear that blessèd path,
Whose traces are so sweet.

I have no cares, O blessèd Lord !
For all my cares are Thine ;
I live in triumph, too, for Thou
Hast made Thy triumphs mine.

And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And, patient, waits on Thee.

Man's weakness, waiting upon God,
Its end can never miss ;
For men on earth no work can do
More angel-like than this.

Lead on, lead on, triumphantly,
O blessèd Lord ! lead on :
Faith's pilgrim sons behind Thee seek
The road that Thou hast gone.

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost ;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill ;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will.

REFRESHING SPRINGS.

Source of my life's refreshing springs,
Whose presence in my heart sustains me,
Thy love appoints me pleasant things,
Thy mercy orders all that pains me.

If loving hearts were never lonely,
If all they wish might always be,
Accepting what they look for only,
They might be glad,—but not in Thee.

Well may Thy own beloved, who see
In all their lot their Father's pleasure,
Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,
Their living, everlasting treasure.

Well may Thy happy children cease
From restless wishes, prone to sin,
And, in Thy own exceeding peace,
Yield to Thy daily discipline.

We need as much the cross we bear,
As air we breathe—as light we see;
It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
It binds us to our strength in Thee.

A. L. W.

THE ANNIVERSARY OF MY MOTHER'S
DEPARTURE TO BE WITH CHRIST.

“In His favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh
in the morning.”

What strange emotions rise
And struggle in my breast!
A chord unstrung! a *mother* gone!
But oh! to endless rest.

How fresh the wound ! though now
A year has passed away :
But oh ! how many hearts have bled
Since that heart-rending day !

I wept, and well I might !
I found the waters deep ;
My sinking heart well nigh o'erwhelmed,
'Twas but *relief* to weep.

I wept, but not as those,
With *hopeless* sorrow pressed,
To whom " far better " is unknown—
And unknown, heavenly rest.

In lonely hour of grief,
With sorrow such as mine,
Where could my fainting heart find rest
Without a hope Divine ?

A resurrection hope,
My spirit to upbear,
A Christ above, seen through my tears,
My keenest pang to share.

I ought to *praise*—I *do* !
One whom I fondly love,
Beyond the reach of grief or pain,
Is blessed *with Christ* above.

Her face, her own sweet smile,
No more below I see ;
But, though I weep, full well I know
They wait to welcome me.

A year !—and what a year
Of patient grace and love !
What openings of the Father's heart
What mercies from above !

In waters deep I've learnt
Depths in His gracious heart,
And, of His mercies, I would least
With these sweet lessons part.

What have I learnt of Christ,
His tender sympathies !
The meltings of His yearning heart !
His gentle ministries !

If then in deepest grief,
When sorrows most abound,
Such depths of love and tenderness
In Thee, my Lord, are found ;

Do Thou with me whate'er
It seemeth good to Thee ;
That I *Thyself* may better know,
Thy power may rest on me.

Edinburgh, Feb. 28th, 1859.

T. M. N.

HE DOETH ALL THINGS WELL.

I remember how I loved her,
When a little guileless child
I saw her in the cradle,
As she looked on me and smiled :
My cup of happiness was full,
My joy words cannot tell,
And I blessed the glorious Giver,
Who doeth all things well.

Months passed : that bud of promise
Was unfolding every hour,
I thought that earth had never smiled
Upon a fairer flower :

So beautiful, it well might grace
The bowers where angels dwell,
And waft its fragrance to His throne,
Who doeth all things well.

Years fled : that little sister then
Was dear as life to me,
And woke in my unconscious heart
A wild idolatry.

I worshipped at an earthly shrine,
Lured by some magic spell,
Forgetful of the praise of Him
Who doeth all things well.

She was the lovely star whose light
Around my pathway shone,
Amid this darksome vale of tears,
Through which I journey on :
Its radiance had obscured the light
Which round His throne should dwell,
And I wandered far away from Him
Who doeth all things well.

That star went down in beauty,
Yet it shineth sweetly now
In the bright and dazzling coronet
Which decks my Saviour's brow :
She bowed to the destroyer,
Whose shafts none may repel ;
But we know, for God hath told us,
He doeth all things well.

I remember well my sorrow
As I stood beside her bed,
And my deep and heartfelt anguish
When they told me she was dead :
And oh ! that cup of bitterness—
Let not my heart rebel ;
God gave ; He took : He will restore ;
HE DOETH ALL THINGS WELL.

THE LORD HATH BORROWED IT.

Rest for the little sleeper ;
Joy for the ransomed soul ;
Peace for the lonely weeper—
Dark though the waters roll.

Weep for the little sleeper ;
Weep, it will ease the heart ;
Though the dull pain be deeper
Than with the world to part.

Hath the dear Saviour found him,
Laid Him upon His breast,
Folded His arms around him,
Hushed him to endless rest ?

Grieve not with hopeless sorrow ;
Jesus has felt your pain.
He did thy lamb but borrow :
He'll bring him back again.

A MOTHER'S LOVE.

A mother's love,—how sweet the name !
What is a mother's love ?
A noble, pure, and tender flame,
Enkindled from above,
To bless a heart of earthly mould ;
The warmest love that *can* grow cold,—
This is a mother's love.

To bring a helpless babe to light ;
Then, while it lies forlorn,
To gaze upon that dearest sight,
And feel herself new born,

In its existence lose her own,
And live and breathe in it alone ;
This is a mother's love.

To mark its growth from day to day,
Its opening charms admire,
Catch from its eye the earliest ray
Of intellectual fire :
To smile and listen while it talks,
And lend a finger when it walks ;
This is a mother's love.

Blest infant ! whom his mother taught
Early to seek the Lord,
And poured upon his dawning thought
The day-spring of the Word ;
This was the lesson to her son—
Time is eternity begun :
Behold that mother's love.

Blest mother ! who in wisdom's path,
By her own parent trod,
Thus taught her son to flee the wrath,
And know the fear, of God ;
Ah, youth ! like him enjoy your prime ;
Begin eternity in time,
Taught by that mother's love.

That mother's love !—how sweet the name !
What was that mother's love ?
The noblest, purest, tenderest flame,
That kindles from above,
Within a heart of earthly mould,
As much of heaven as heart can hold,
Nor through eternity grows cold,—
This was a mother's love.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

SONG IN THE DAY OF THE EAST WIND.

Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise ;
When I call on Christ my Saviour, the host of evil flies.
My friend, the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God !
What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood ?
I know it, I believe 'it, I say it fearlessly,
That God the highest, mightiest, for ever loveth me.
At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side :
He rules the battle fury, the tempest, and the tide.

A Rock that stands for ever is Christ my Righteousness ;
And there I stand unfearing in everlasting bliss ;
No earthly thing is needful to this my life from heaven,
And nought of love is worthy save that which Christ has given—
Christ all my praise and glory, my light most sweet and fair ;
The ship in which He saileth is scathless everywhere.
In Him I dare be joyful as a hero in the war,
The judgment of the sinner affrighteth me no more.

There is no condemnation, there is no hell for me :
The torment and the fire my eyes shall never see :
For me there is no sentence ; for me death has no sting,
Because the Lord who loves me shall shield me with His wing.
Above my soul's dark waters His Spirit hovers still ;
He guards me from all sorrows, from terror and from ill.
In me He works, and blesses the life-seed He has sown ;
From Him I learnt the " Abba," that prayer of faith alone.

And if, in lonely places, a fearful child I shrink,
He prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think ;
The deep unspoken language known only to that love
Who fathoms the heart's mystery from the throne of light above.
His Spirit to my spirit sweet words of comfort saith,
How God the weak one strengthens who leans on Him in faith ;
How He hath built a city of love and light and song,
Where the eye at last beholdeth what the heart had loved so long.

And there is mine inheritance, my kingly palace-home ;
The leaf may fall and perish, not less the spring will come ;
Like wind and rain of winter, our earthly sighs and tears,
Till the golden summer dawneth of the endless year of years.
The world may pass and perish : Thou, God, wilt not remove.
No hatred of all devils can part me from Thy love ;
No hungering nor thirsting, no poverty nor care,
No wrath of mighty princes can reach my shelter there.

No angel and no heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might ;
No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor fight ;
No height, no depth, no creature that has been, or can be,
Can drive me from Thy bosom, can sever me from Thee.
My heart in joy uleapeth, grief cannot linger there ;
She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair ;
The sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His love,
The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above.

PAUL GERHARDT.

TRUST IN GOD.

Roll on, roll on, ye waves of trouble, roll,
A Father's hand supports my fainting head ;
Each heavy tide brings nearer to the goal,
And known to God is every tear I shed.
Calmly on Jesus' bosom I recline ;
All heaven and earth are mine !

Smile on, smile on, thou vain deceitful world,
Ah, what to me is thine unhallowed mirth ?
I've seen the banner of the cross unfurled,
Weighed in its scales the precious things of earth.
Farewell, vain world : I love the Crucified ;
'Twas here He groaned and died !

Whirl on, whirl on, ye giddy, glittering sounds—
 Wealth, honour, pleasure : what are ye to me ?
 Far beyond all that mortal vision bounds,
 The Lamb of God upon the throne I see.
 Ah, to an eye lit up by glory's beams,
 Things here are fading dreams.

Frown on, frown on, thou bitter, bitter foe,
 I do not fear thy power or hellish art ;
 Thou canst not break the oath of God ; oh, no !
 Nor canst thou tear me from a Saviour's heart.
 Safe in His arms the Shepherd bears me home ;
 And I must overcome.

Glide on, glide on, ye days, and months, and years :
 Father, I ask but to be spent for Thee !
 What though I sojourn in a vale of tears,
 To live is Christ, to die is gain to me.
 O God, at what a price Thou hast purchased this
 Full cup of endless bliss !

LET ME GO HOME !

Longer upon this earth I would not stay :
 My pulse beats low ;
 And angel forms, too, beckon me away—
 Even let me go !
 Shadows pass over me, like a summer's dream,
 And they so vague, yet clear ;
 Come, now I stand by Jordan's welcome stream,
 My drooping soul to cheer :
 Let me go home !

Why pray that I may live ? *I shall not die,*
But only sleep.
 Nay, dearest sister, do those tear-drops dry :
 Oh, do not weep !

A few short moments, and my race is run ;
Then, like a child at rest,
I'll lay my weary head, when all is done,
Upon my Saviour's breast !
Let me go home !

If I, with joy, the birds in yon blue sky
Their strains admire,
How—with what rapture—shall I join on high
The heavenly choir !
If on yon orb I gaze with rapture true,
How, in that world so bright,
Shall I rejoice, when God, its King, I view ?
The Lamb thereof, the Light !
Let me go home !

How calm the dying taper's flickering light !
So gently soft !
The ransomed soul prepares to wing its flight,
And soar aloft !
I know, within those glorious realms above,
A mansion waits me there—
All purchased for me by redeeming love—
And joys without compare :
Let me go home !

Say, what was that ? Methought I heard a voice
So soft and sweet :
Attune your harps ! He comes ! Rejoice ! Rejoice !
His Spirit greet !
I see, I hear them come—yon seraphs bright—
My soul to bear away !
All hail ! ye mansions of eternal light,
Of everlasting day !
Let me go home !

"FOR EVER WITH THE LORD."

The Lord Himself shall come,
And shout a quickening word ;
Thousands shall answer from the tomb :
"For ever with the Lord !"

Then, as we upward fly,
That resurrection word
Shall be our shout of victory :
"For ever with the Lord !"

"Knowing as I am known !"—
How shall I love that word,
How oft repeat before the throne :
"For ever with the Lord !"

That resurrection word,
That shout of victory—
Once more, *"For ever with the Lord !"*
Amen, so let it be !



MEDITATIONS

ON THE

EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM.

THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM is, in some respects, very different to the TWENTY-THIRD; still, in other respects they resemble each other, and may be profitably studied together. Both have been favourite themes of meditation with the children of God in all ages—both are practical and experimental. In the one we are introduced by the Good Shepherd to the green pastures and the still waters. In the other we are led by the same hand into the courts and tabernacles of the Lord. But the way to the full blessing in both is through the valley. Whether it be the King's table or the hill of Zion, the way to both lies through the vale of tears.

The subject of the *house*, or *habitation* of God, occupies a large and an interesting place in Scripture. Thus we have the tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple in the land, the Church of God now, the house of many mansions in heaven, and the tabernacle of God with men in the post-millennial earth. But as our great object is the promotion and deepening of practical Christianity in the souls of our readers, we would glance, in our meditations on the eighty-fourth Psalm, at the state of things in the professing Church

around us. We may thus use Old Testament types and terms in illustration of New Testament truths, and of the practices of professing Christians.

Ver. 1. "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" It is well with the soul when it longs after the habitation of God—when it loves the meetings of His saints *because He is there*. It is the Divine nature breathing after the living God, and desiring blessing from Him.

There may be a certain pleasure felt by some in attending a place of worship, so-called, who have no Divine life in their souls; but such go not to meet God. Strong emotions of a reverential kind may be awakened through tender associations, as the congregation sings,

"How lovely is Thy dwelling-place,
O Lord of hosts, to me!
The tabernacles of Thy grace,
How pleasant, Lord, they be.

* * * * *

"We'll go into His tabernacles,
And at His footstool bow:
Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest,
Th' ark of Thy strength, and Thou."

Nevertheless, were they to be told when on the way to their accustomed meeting-place, that *God* was to be there, they would gladly turn back. It is only those who are *born again* that can say, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Having the Divine nature, we are *capable* of enjoying God and fighting in Him. True personal piety loves the

tabernacles of the Lord. The place of His presence is the favourite resort of the devout soul. Three things are necessary to acceptable worship. 1. The Divine nature as the capacity. 2. The Holy Spirit as the power. 3. The word of God as the rule. John iv. 23, 24.

This is true and blessed experience, O my soul: pray, is it thine? It is only that kind of experience which all the children of God may have, even the babes in Christ. It is written, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and surely the child is the same nature as his Father, and *capable* of the closest fellowship with Him; but we have also His word and Spirit. True, O most true! But art thou child-like enough to have no rule but thy Father's word, and no power but His Spirit? Is there nothing in thy religious ways which is the fruit of *tradition or education*? O my Father and my God, I know I am Thine—I bow to thy truth; but oh give me to enter more distinctly, more consciously, into the blessed realities of Divine worship.

But may I ask of thee, and of all to whom the question belongs—What is thy motive? what is thine object? what are thy desires in attending the meetings of God's people? Art thou quite clear about the *three things*? Do not the frequency, regularity, and general uniformity of the services tend to weaken their proper effect on thy soul, and to lead thee to forget their true meaning and object? The thought of going to the habitation of God, and of being *with Him* there, could not fail to produce an immense effect upon us, if we fully realise it. What thorough

self-judgment there would be, before leaving the secret chamber for the public sanctuary ; and what close watchfulness over every thought, word, and act, while there : not that there should be the least feeling of bondage, for the Father's presence is the children's home, and the place of happy liberty. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." He not only *accepts*, but *seeks* our worship. He loves to hear His children's praise, adoration, thanksgiving. But, for this very reason, He would have their worship to be with the heart, and with the understanding also.

Oh ! what a thought ! What grace ! God dwelling with men : not as a visitor merely, as He was with our first parents in the garden of Eden, but as a dweller. Meditate on this great truth, O my soul. Be not thoughtless or forgetful, suffer not custom to induce formality ; alas, that the constant enjoyment of such privileges should be the means of destroying their native power over our souls ! Remember, oh remember, it is the *tabernacles of the Lord of hosts* thou art invited to. The word "tabernacle" means *the dwelling of God with man*. This thought of wondrous love and grace to us has been in God's mind from the beginning. He showed Moses a pattern of the tabernacle on the mount. The plan is His own ; but oh, what will it be when it is fully carried out ! For this we must wait until we reach our Father's house on high, and also the new heavens and the new earth. Then God will have everything His own way in His own house. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold *the tabernacle of God is with men*, he will dwell with them, and they shall be his

people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away." Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

What a description of our future dwelling-place ! Who can conceive its blessedness ? But it is home—the dwelling-place of God, for the heavenly saints will be His tabernacle, and yet we shall dwell with Him. What a mystery of love and glory—of grace and blessedness ! And, oh ! wondrous thought ! this is the eternal state, and *home* is its character. The millennium is past—the ages have run their course—eternity in its unmingled happiness is begun. And what is the symbol of its perfect blessedness ? Just that which has always been the symbol of God's grace and man's privilege, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus—" *The tabernacle of God.*" Now, the Church is the "habitation of God, through the Spirit." Then it will be His tabernacle : during the millennium it will be seen as "the holy city, the new Jerusalem."

" With Him I love, in spotless white,
In glory I shall shine ;
His blissful presence my delight,
His love and glory mine.

" All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away :
And I shall dwell with God's beloved,
Through God's eternal day."

But the leading thought in our beautiful psalm is

not so much *our dwelling with God*, as *God dwelling with us*. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." At the present moment, of course, it is in the Church He dwells, through the Holy Spirit. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 16—22.) Ere long, the children will have reached their Father's house on high, as we have already seen ; but so long as they are "passing through the valley of Baca," He graciously moves with them in their travelling tent, so that, in one sense, they are absent from *His* dwelling-place, the house of many mansions, and are earnestly longing to be there, as we often sweetly sing—

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him, I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

"Then shall all clouds depart,
The wilderness shall cease ;
And sweetly shall each gladdened heart
Enjoy eternal peace."

But it is to the great truth of God's presence with us now, in the assemblies of His saints, that I desire to draw thy closest attention, O my soul. And, as Paul says to his son Timothy, "That thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) Surely the consideration that He is there, would lead to a spirit of worship and holy becoming watchfulness over our

whole deportment. For although the house, through man's failure (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21), has become "a great house," in which there are vessels "to honour, and some to dishonour," the *principle* of God's habitation, and that which is due to *His presence*, must remain unchangeably the same. And if we cannot say *in faith*, the Lord is *there*, what is the use of our going? It would only be a human association, however orderly, not the "habitation of God through the Spirit." It is on this blessed fact, O my soul, that I beg thy deepest meditation. "For where two or three are gathered together in *my name*," saith the Lord, "there am I in the midst of them." This is His pledge. He seeks not to be relieved from it; only we do relieve Him, if we are gathered in any name but His. This is the condition, "Gathered together in my name:" that is the pledge, "there am I in the midst of them." True, I grant, the Lord is above all our ignorance and failure, and He can be, and surely is, present in meetings where faith could not say, for certain, the Lord is in the midst of them. Faith is ruled by the word of God, not by the experience even of His blessing. *Faith* in His presence works wonders in the soul, and in the assembly. It checks the pretensions of mere nature; it readily dispenses with all human inventions; it quiets all fears, and gives perfect rest of heart in His all-sufficiency.

But how is it, may I ask—on what ground can God thus dwell with sinful man? This seems even more wonderful than *men* dwelling with God in their bodies of glory. Both are wonderful; but both are the fruit of the great work of redemption. We owe both to

the blood of Jesus. Redemption is the foundation of the relationship. We never read of God dwelling with Adam in the garden of Eden, though in a state of innocence. He made a happy dwelling-place for him, and set him in it, and it would appear that He visited him there, but He never dwelt with him. Creation could not furnish a suitable foundation for God's dwelling-place on earth.

The song of Moses (Exod. xv.) is the first intimation we have of God's habitation on the earth. But now, observe, redemption, typically, is accomplished—the great deliverance is wrought. The desire of Moses is answered by the revelation of God's own eternal purpose. But He waits until His people are safely through the sea. "The Lord is my strength and song," sang Moses, "and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Farther on he is privileged to sing God's answer to his own desire. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people which thou hast *redeemed*, thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy *holy habitation*. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." Note here, my soul, that God adds the word "holy" when speaking of His habitation—not *merely* "habitation" according to the desire of Moses, but "holy habitation;" and, further, it is called "the sanctuary." These expressions stamp the character of God's dwelling-place according to His mind.

Now that the work of redemption is accomplished—His people delivered out of the land of Egypt—not a hoof left behind—the song of victory on their lips, and their faces Zionward, He ascends His cloudy chariot as the great “I AM,” to guide them through the desert, and be their all-sufficient help in every time of need.

Learn then, O my soul, this one, grand, all-per-vading truth—the *value of the blood of Jesus*. Or, rather, seek to know God’s estimate of its value. When thou hast in some good measure learnt this lesson, a thousand doubts and difficulties, as to God’s ways in grace with man, will disappear. But who on earth can speak of its power? We know it delivers from Egypt’s bondage, sin, and misery, and vindicates God in showing mercy. It is the basis of all blessing from first to last; it is our title to the highest privileges, and to the richest blessings of heaven. It has rent the veil, and laid open the way to the Father’s throne, and fitted the children to be there; it has opened to the worshipper the holy of holies; and it has unlocked to the sleeping dust of God’s redeemed the portals of the tomb. It meets the highest claims of God, and the deepest necessities of man.

Is it asked then, how can God dwell on earth with failing man? The answer is in the blood. Or, is it asked, how can such ever dwell with God in heaven? Again, we can only reply, the answer is in the blood. In virtue of that precious blood, faith can say—the *immediateness of God’s presence, in Christ, is now my happy home, and shall assuredly be for ever*. And so far

from feeling anything like a spirit of bondage there, the blessed feeling is—at home, in happy liberty ; but *everywhere else* is distance, bondage, misery.

“ My joy was in the blood, the news of which had told me
That spotless as the Lamb of God my Father could behold me,
And all my boast was in His name
Through whom this great salvation came.

“ And when, with golden harps, the throne of God surrounding,
The white-robed saints around the throne their songs of joy
are sounding,
With them I'll praise that precious blood
Which has redeemed our souls to God.”

But before passing on to the second verse, may I have a word with those who have never felt their need, or seen the value, of the blood of Jesus? You go regularly, it may be, to what you call your place of worship ; but whatever it may be to others, to you it can be no place of worship. Worship is the grace that has come down to save, re-ascending in grateful praise. But you are unpardoned, unsaved, unreconciled to God, and dare not come into His presence. His presence would be intolerable to you, and your sin would be intolerable to Him. Without the pardoning, cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, you can never come happily together. Why then, O why, be satisfied with a mere form of religion? Were God to meet you on your own ground, what would be the consequence? Nothing but the terrors of judgment against sin—nothing “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” The “ad-

versaries" are those who despise the blood of the covenant.

Oh then, dear friends—you who belong to that class,—that large class, who pay an outward respect to religion, but have no inward grace in your souls,—be warned, affectionately warned in time. The mere flickering light of profession is extinguished for ever when the Bridegroom comes. You are left in darkness, eternal darkness, just when the light is needed. The brightness of His coming will extinguish for ever the lamps of the foolish virgins. Let me entreat you then to come at once to Jesus. Come to Himself. His own word is "Come unto *me*." It is not, be persuaded, go there, or do this, or that; but simply, sweetly, graciously, heartily, "Come unto me," and the promise is sure, "I will give you rest." If you come to Jesus, you are God's friends; if you refuse, you are God's foes. Are you not alarmed sometimes? are you not unhappy? It must be so. Are you not going the downward road to destruction with your eyes open? Oh! what shelter, think you, would the thin veil of a little religiousness afford? It would only be the witness of your guilt, like Adam's fig-leaf apron, and aggravate your misery. Awful thought! No Jesus—no blood—no pardon—no salvation—no heaven! Oh! the thought, the dreadful thought, of going down, it may be, from a well-frequented pew, or from the communion table, to the depths of unutterable woe.

May God in mercy save from this awful doom every precious soul that shall ever hold these lines in his hands! Him that cometh to me, says the loving, gra-

cious Saviour, I will in no wise cast out. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

" The seraphim, with shading wings,
Whose cry through heaven's vast temple rings,
In glory serve near God's high throne ;
And there may BLOOD-WASHED sinners come.
From darkness brought to wondrous light,
And called to walk with Christ in white,
Oh may our lips and lives declare
His praise, whose holy name we bear."

Ver. 2. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* Here, an important question presents itself—Is there any difference between the state of a believer who longs and thirsts for the courts of the Lord, and one who longs and thirsts for the Lord Himself? Most assuredly there is. Both states are good, and they may be very closely connected, but they are distinct ; and both may have been the experience of the believer at different times. In the one case, *blessing* is desired ; in the other, it is *God Himself*. Blessing would surely be the result in the latter case, even more abundantly than in the former ; but it is not the *object*. If the quality of an action depends upon the motive, the difference is manifest. In the one state, *self* is thought of ; in the other, God only. But if we compare the first two verses of this psalm with the first two of Psalm lxi., we may see more clearly what the difference is.

Psalm lxi., you will observe, opens differently to Psalm lxxiv., and surely in a much higher strain. The desire of the soul is for God Himself. It

says, with great fervour, "*My God.*" It is fully conscious of its relationship with Him, and the blessings which flow therefrom. What state of soul can be more blessed than this? Only listen to its deep and ardent, yet holy breathings, "O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psalm lxxxiv. opens with, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Here, God is known and desired, but it is in His relationship with His people—as He reveals Himself in the assembly of His saints. There, it is the direct, blessed, outgoing of the whole heart to Himself, abstractly, though placed in the most unfavourable circumstances, even in the dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Here, it is more like the longings of a captive Israelite, who once enjoyed the privileges of tabernacle worship, but who is now deprived of those happy seasons. Nevertheless, he who thus longs after the courts of the Lord is no stranger, either to them, or to the Lord who is worshipped there. It was love to the Lord, no doubt, that led the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, to propose to make three tabernacles. The desire was that He might remain with them in the tabernacle; so that, in some cases, the tabernacles may be valued for the sake of Him who dwells there. But though the living God must ever be the real object of all the desires of the renewed soul, the blessed truth, as to the privileges of God's

children, may not be fully known ; and if so, the thoughts cannot rise to their proper centre.

How grateful to the heart of God must it be, to see His child so longing after Himself, and so caring for His glory, as in Psalm lxi. ; and that, too, when everything in the world is against it. But in such a case, self is lost sight of, it is the Divine life that breathes. What bloom—what fruit, for the eye of God, in this wilderness world ! But this was always and perfectly so in Christ *only*. The world, and even Israel as God's sanctuary, was to Him a dry and thirsty land, yet His first care ever was His Father's glory. Blessed, perfect example, for all the children of God ! Let it be thine, I pray thee, O my soul. Let the subject command thy deepest meditation. It is worthy of thy most prayerful study, and of thy closest imitation. This world never furnished for Him one drop of water to quench His thirst, or one green blade to refresh His eye ; yet He complained not, but trusted in the Lord and waited for Him. All His fresh springs were on high. He drank at the fountain ; yet, as man, He thirsted for God—the living God, as no one else ever did. He could say, in a sense peculiarly His own, " O GOD, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

But is not the Christian welcome now in those courts above, as was the once lowly Jesus Himself ? Through the riches of God's grace he is. And, oh ! what grace this is ! His title is thine—His privileges are thine—thou art ONE with Him as the exalted

man in heaven. Let thy thoughts then, and the deep breathings of thy heart rise to their proper object. Though feeling this world's barrenness, murmur not, but send thy thoughts above, and drink at the fountain there. Reckon that all thy fresh springs are in the living God—thy God and Father. Meditate on the countless blessings of accomplished redemption, and of closest relationship. Know that thou art a child in the family of God—a member in the body of Christ, as risen and glorified, and also a servant in His kingdom. Seek, O seek, to walk worthy of such distinguished privileges. They are now real to faith, and shall, ere long, be fully manifested in the glory. And, oh! blessed truth, these relations in grace can never be disturbed. God's gifts and calling are without repentance. He never recalls His gifts, neither in time nor throughout eternity. Hast thou a gift?—wait upon it—cultivate it—be diligent in thy gift—it is thine for ever, and to be used for ever for God's glory, though now we know not in what way. But, meantime, let these things be thy whole study—the one great business of all thy earthly days. The knowledge of Christ is the most excellent of all knowledge; and the science of Christianity is the most excellent of all science.

But we must take one other glance at Psalm lxxiii. before leaving it. In place of the saint seeking his own blessing in the courts of the Lord, right as that may be, we find him longing to see the power and glory of God. "My soul longeth," he says, "to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." This is surely a blessed state of

soul to be in, especially when in the sanctuary, or seated at the Lord's table. In place of thinking about good to ourselves, we should be thinking about glory to Him. Would to God that this were more usually the case with those whose privilege it is to remember and show forth His dying love!

How differently even Christians may be occupied, though seated around the same table, and eating the same bread, and drinking the same wine. We speak not now of timid, doubting souls, who go there fearing and trembling, lest they should eat and drink judgment to themselves; but of those who have the full assurance of pardon and acceptance. Some may be occupied with the happy associations of the place—the presence of certain friends, rather than the presence of the Lord; or, it may be, with their own refreshment. They may have come weary and thirsty, but their thoughts and desires are not rising higher than their own blessing. Of course, they know it is the Lord's table, and that He is there; but such is their present state of soul, that they rise not to full occupation with Himself, or to the apprehension of His power and glory as displayed in the sanctuary. But when we have more thoroughly done with self, and are more fully occupied with Christ, it is different. He is then our all and in all—a perfect covering to the eyes—the complete filling up of the heart. We are sweetly conscious of our nearness *to* Him, and of our oneness *with* Him. We *remember* Him on the cross, we *know* Him on the throne. The effects of cross and the effects of the glory are seen and Love is lost in its object, and the disciple is

lost in his Lord. He has not a breath but for His praise, and not a word but for thanksgiving.

“ Of the vast universe of bliss,
The Centre Thou, and Sun :
The eternal theme of praise is this,
To heaven's beloved One.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow.”

This, O my soul, is worship—true, spiritual worship ; and well becomes, on all occasions, the courts of the Lord—the holy of holies. Christ has His right place in the heart, and in the assembly. The Holy Ghost is ungrieved—unquenched. Is this thine own experience, may I ask ? Is it thy habit, or only known at intervals and far between ? There is no good reason why it should not be the uniform experience of every Christian. The blood of the sacrifice has been sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat—sin has been blotted out—the Great High-priest is in the sanctuary above, and the Holy Ghost is in the assembly on earth. God is fully satisfied in Christ ; He has thought of everything for us—we can only worship and adore. “ Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Heb. iii. 1.

We now turn for a little, in our meditations on the sanctuary, to a class of hearers, who stand at an infinite distance from those on whom we have been meditating. No comparison can be drawn. Outwardly, all may seem to have the same object in view ; but, inwardly, and in God's sight, it is far otherwise.

There is *reality* in the one, but only *formality* in the other. Christians may be actuated by different motives, but all have eternal life, and, like water, this life naturally rises to its source—God in Christ. Hence the thirst for God—the living God. They cannot live in a land where no water is, they must draw from the resources of heaven to meet their need on earth. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John iv. 14.) But where there is no Divine life, there can be no Divine motive, desire, or object. The natural man rises no higher than himself: self, not God, is his centre, motive, and end.

Why, then, it may be asked, does the natural man care about going to *any* place of worship? Various reasons might be given; but in no case could it be said that to “draw near to God” is his object. His thought is rather to appease God by going, and to keep Him at a distance. We speak now of professors, who know something of God and of their own unfitness for His presence, but who attend some place of Divine worship—so called.

There is in every merely natural man a dread of God. Ever since the day that “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden,” it has been so. And the truth which we have now stated then came out. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” But just because man is afraid of God, he

is willing to go through a certain amount of religious observances, with the view, as we have said, of appeasing or satisfying God, and thus, for the time, keeping Him at a distance. This may not be said in so many words, or even owned, but the melancholy fact is everywhere apparent. Are not the usual carnal enjoyments of a Sunday afternoon more heartily entered into when the usual religious services have been attended to in the forenoon? And why is this? Because the neglect of religious duties would disturb the conscience, and so mar the pleasure.

Miserable as this state of things may appear, it is but the necessary condition of souls not reconciled to God. Such must be the state of things between the soul and God, however fair the profession, until He is known in the Person and work of Jesus. These two words of awful depth, "without God," describe their sad condition. Nothing can be more awful. "Without God" as to every circumstance around, and "without God" as to every thought and feeling within. What a gloomy, lonely, empty scene it must be, notwithstanding the apparent gaiety and happiness of those who fill it! The immortal soul, with its noble capacities, is without its proper object. Still, while here, it is upheld by a false hope, and the enemy is hindered from driving it to despair. Indeed his object is rather to soothe and stimulate, than to awaken and alarm. The deadly sleep of sin suits his purpose better. But oh, what must the agony be, when the eyes are opened in that place where no mercy can ever come—when the fearful and hopeless doom of the soul is fully realized!

Dear reader, if thou art still "without God"—a Christian only in name—oh! listen to a word of faithful warning, entreaty, and encouragement. Why, O why, not give heed to these things *now*? Why not believe God's word *now*? Why not flee from the wrath to come *now*? The full tide of God's free grace is flowing through the land *now*. Whosoever will, may drink of these living waters *now*. The door of mercy stands wide open *now*. The Saviour waits to welcome all who come *now*. None who come are cast out *now*. The very *fountain* of redeeming love is open to all *now*. It is free to all—it is free to thee: come—O come—drink freely—drink abundantly—the spring can never dry up—the channel can never be choked—why not drink and live? Why content thyself with a mere empty form. Nothing short of reality will suit God. Refuse not these living waters now, lest the day come when worlds could not purchase one drop of cold water to cool thy burning tongue. Oh! what a day of grace this is, when access to the very fountain of God's love is open to the chief of sinners—to the most hollow of professors. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the *fountain* of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxi. 9.) *Now*, grace is supreme, it is characterized as a sovereign. "Grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. v. 21.

Oh sin not away, dear reader, this day of wondrous grace! Even now thou art an infinite loser, with all thy earthly pleasures, compared with one who can say, "O God, thou art my God." Who could

describe the black desolation of a soul that is without God—without the Saviour—without the Comforter—and, consequently, without pardon—without peace—without salvation? The good things of this life may be possessed in abundance—the heart may be generous—the mind richly endowed—the associations to a wish, and a capacity ample enough to enjoy them all. Still, he is “without God,” and the whole system in which he moves, so far as his soul is concerned, is an utter desolation—a scene of dismal emptiness. Why, supposing he could lay his hand on all the treasures of earth, and say, “these are mine,” it would be but earth still, and earth only.

Nothing short of being brought to God in all the blessedness of Christ, can meet the soul's need. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye *must* be born again.” God only can fill up the dreary void of an unsaved soul. There is no life but in His favour—no rest but in His love, and no joy but in His presence. “In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Wert thou a master in Israel, and a stranger to the new birth, it would avail thee nothing. There is no heavier doom in Scripture than that which is denounced against “sinners in Zion ;” and no judgment so given in detail as that against Babylon. “The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites : who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?” (Isa. xxxiii. 14.) This must be the fearful end, and the awful

eternity of those who are not "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." Outside of His presence they must be for ever. And, in saying this, we have said what is the summing up of all misery. To be outside the presence of God, is to be in *the forsaken place*. A thousand figures may be used to describe its desolation, but one stroke of the Divine pen sums it all up in that word "*forsaken*." What heart would not sink there? We learn something of its terrible-ness from Him who was there in love for us.

It is bad enough to be "without God in this world," but what must it be in the next? Now, the sinner thinks the evil day far off, hope bears him up, and he makes merry with his friends, and seems quite happy. But the day will come when he must leave them all, and then, alas, the awful reality will be known. The eternity which he refused to prepare for, and the wrath which he refused to flee from, are come. Behind the stroke of death which has removed him from this world, is the judgment of God against sin; and now *that* judgment must take its course. There is no Saviour—no intercessor, at the judgment-seat. The awful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," is heard. He had often listened to the invitation, "Come unto me," but heeded it not. But now, no beseeching, bitter cry can alter the sentence—he knows it. Beseeching, weeping, struggling, are in vain. He must go to his place. But alas! alas! it is *the forsaken place*—forsaken of God, forsaken of man: as, godless, Christless, homeless, friendless, he is cast into outer darkness. His eternal state is sealed. The gates of hell can never be opened,

and the chain that binds him can never be broken. Weep, weep, O my soul! lament with a sore lamentation—the fearful end of “sinners in Zion”—of lifeless professors! Oh that the gospel trumpet may give a long, a loud, and a certain sound everywhere—that many may be awakened ere it be too late!

Should these lines ever meet the eye of one whose conscience honestly says, “I am the man”—pause I pray thee, and listen to a last appeal. That fearful place, shouldst thou be taken away in thy sins, must be thine for ever. Yes, painful as it is to write it—that sentence—that prison-house—that chain—that fire, must, ere long, be thine, unless there be a thorough change of mind—a genuine repentance—and a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But why not be decided at once, and give thy heart to Jesus? Is it fair, I ask, to offer to Him the cold formalities of a lifeless faith, and to give thy whole heart to the world? He only deserves the heart, and He only can lawfully demand it. But well I know thou wilt never give thy heart to Him, until thou believest that He has given His heart for thee. But when this great truth is seen, no power on earth or in hell could keep thy heart from Him. Then thy cry would be, “Oh, if I had a hundred hearts He should have them all!”

“Take Thou our hearts, and let them be
For ever closed to all but Thee;
Thy willing servants, let us wear
The seal of love for ever there.”

Let thine eye then, dear reader, be fixed on the loving Saviour, and keep it fixed there, until thy *heart*

goes freely out to Him. It can only be drawn by what thou seest in Him. Think not of thine own heart, or of the act of surrendering it. Let Him draw it to Himself, blessed Lord! He only is worthy of it, and He only can fill it. Dwell on the love of His heart—think of the love that willingly went to the *forsaken place* for thee a sinner; and if the gates of thy heart open not to the loving, long-suffering, gracious Saviour, who still knocks, and still patiently waits there, all the tongues and pens in the world must prove ineffectual. The Lord grant that thy heart may be made captive by His victorious love!

“Drawn by such cords we’ll onward move,
Till round the throne we meet,
And, captives in the chains of love,
Embrace our Saviour’s feet.”

Ver. 3. “*Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.*” The tender care of God, over the least of His creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The psalmist, while in exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God’s altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of His minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. “God fails not,” as one has beautifully said, “to find a house for the most *worthless*, and a nest for the most *restless*

of birds. What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security—a shelter from storm—a covert to hide one's self in, from every evil—a protection from all that can harm—"a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in"?

But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strikes us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not Him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither His heart nor His hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of His tender care; He thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek, and find, and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God Himself. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

But that we may the better understand the true position and the spiritual meaning of the altars of God, let us take a glance for a moment at the camp in the wilderness.

Coming towards the tabernacle, we meet with the *sin-offering*. It is burning outside the camp. The sin with which the victim was charged, typically, is consumed there. This is the type of Christ, who

knew no sin, made sin for us. The whole question of sin was settled on the cross. The sin of our nature, and the many sins of our life, were judged, condemned, and put away there. The blood of the sin-offering was taken within the veil, and its body was burnt to ashes outside the camp. The apostle, in alluding to this offering, observes, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Heb. xiii. 11, 12.

And now, leaving the sin-offering behind, we enter the gate of the court. The first thing that meets us here, is the *brazen altar*, or altar of *burnt-offering*: sin is not the question here. That has been dealt with outside. It is a *sweet-savour offering*. Jesus, the spotless Lamb, is a sweet savour unto God. There is *identification* with the offering, on the part of the offerer, but no transfer of guilt to it. "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him." (Lev. i. 4.) This *identification* of the offerer with the offering, plainly sets forth the Christian's identification with Christ in death, resurrection, ascension, and acceptance. The whole of the offering ascended as a sweet savour unto God. Infinite holiness, righteousness, and love, fed upon the burnt-offering. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John x. 17.) The believer is one with Christ who died and rose again, and is accepted in the Beloved. When

this truth is known in the soul, the believer has settled peace with God. He rests, as it were, in the altar. "Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." Not that the Jew ever had what we call *settled* peace; "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But what they could not do, Christ has done. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x.) So that the spiritual meaning of the types is now more fully revealed. "The darkness is past," as John says, "and the true light now shineth." Hence, Jewish terms are used in the New Testament, as *illustrative*, rather than *descriptive* of Christian blessing. The terms "altars," "sanctuary," "tent," and "tabernacle," are full of instruction to the Christian, and are typical of that which is connected with our position, character, and blessing; but it is always better to study the shadow through the substance, than the substance through the shadow.

May we not say of many now, that they still linger in the cheerless desert, and never get nearer the tabernacle than the sin-offering? Like the publican they stand afar off, and cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" but we can never tread the courts of the Lord, until, having seen our sins consumed in the wilderness, we pass through the gate. Then we can say with the apostle, "He who was delivered for our offences"—as the sin-offering, "was raised again for our justification"—as the burnt-offering. Then the true consequences of faith in the complete work of Christ are divinely given. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord

Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is Christian position, and perfect rest to the heart. Being justified—having peace—standing in grace—waiting for glory. Death, judgment, sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, are all behind him, and nothing but the glory of God fills his bright future. He is to "rejoice in hope," not merely of glory, but "of the glory of God." For a believer to *remain* in the barren wilderness, and cry to God for mercy as a sinner, or as a leper outside the camp, is not humility, but dishonouring to the Lord, and injurious to ourselves. The Lord give us to rest in the work finished at the brazen altar, and to worship in the sweet fragrance of the golden altar!

" O Lord, the way, the truth, the life !
Henceforth let sorrow, doubt, and strife,
Drop off like autumn leaves !
Henceforth as privileged by Thee,
Simple and undistracted be,
My soul which to Thee cleaves ! "

We now advance to the *laver*. It stood between the brazen altar and the door of the tabernacle. We have the substance of this shadow in John xiii. At the consecration of the priest, the entire person was washed at the laver; but this washing was never repeated. It was the sign of regeneration. "The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We may be *restored* more than once, but we can only be *regenerated* once.

In all who would draw near to God, regeneration is the *first* and indispensable thing. We must first

be right as to *nature*, and then as to *practice*. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But though we cannot trace or explain the operations of the Spirit in the new birth, there is no need to be perplexed, or troubled with doubts as to the blessed reality. The word of God is plain. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And again, we read, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The soul that has faith in Christ Jesus, has been washed in the laver of regeneration, and is capable of worshipping and serving God.

After the priests were duly consecrated, they only washed their hands and feet at the laver; but this they did every time that they engaged in service, or drew near to worship. What a lesson for thee, O my soul! Weigh it well. Dismiss it not in haste. Dwell on the great practical bearing of these words, "*Every time they engaged in service, or drew near to worship.*" Regeneration is not enough of itself for the worship and service of God; nay, more, the full assurance of pardon outside the camp, and of acceptance inside the court, are not enough; there must be personal purity—the sanctification of the heart to God, or communion with Him will be interrupted. Holiness becometh God's people—God's service—God's worship—God's house, for ever. No change of dispensation can alter this. "It shall be a statute *for ever* to them."

On pain of death, the priests were commanded to

wash their hands and their feet at the laver, according to the ordinance of God. *They* might not always see a need for it, nevertheless they were to wash. Neither would *any sort* of water do, it must be the water in the laver of brass. Here again, my soul, learn another lesson ; for I know of no symbol more fraught with practical lessons than the laver. Learn then, that no human resource—no merely human notion or effort, however apparently wise and prudent, can supply that which fits us for the worship and service of God. And many who are content to trust Christ for *justification*, believe that *santification* is a matter of attainment by their own efforts ; hence their disquiet, and often great trouble of soul, because they see no progress. But we must learn to find all in Christ, and make progress in our knowledge of Him, and of what we have *now* in Him. The laver, most likely, was filled with water from the smitten rock—from the same wounded side the cleansing water and the justifying blood both flowed.

The hands and the feet characterize our works and our ways ; and if we would go on happily with God, all these must be tested by His word. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. . . . By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” (Psalm cxix. 9 ; xvii. 4.) The word of God, acting upon the heart and conscience, through the light and power of the Holy Spirit, answers to the typical use of the laver. It is “the washing of water by the word.” But if we allow in our works or ways that which the word of God condemns, the freshness

and power of our Christian character are gone. Solemn consideration! Would to God it were more considered! How often, alas! it happens, that for some trifling vanity, Christ is lost sight of, the blood of atonement, and the water of purification are forgotten, communion is interrupted, spiritual weakness follows, and, it may be, doubts and fears. Under such circumstances, we can only drag heavily through a service which we may not be willing openly to give up; and in some circumstances, such spiritual deadness must prove a drag upon others.

As the importance of this subject cannot be overestimated, we shall give in full the word of the Lord thereon. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal; and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations." Exod. xxx. 18-21.

The force of these solemn warnings seems to be embodied in the Lord's words to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He does not say, observe, thou hast no part *in* me, but, no part *with* me. It is not a question of *life in Christ*, but of

fellowship with Him. The meaning of the figure is plain—in going through this world of temptation and sin, after our conversion, we contract defilement by the way, which Christ only, as our great High-Priest, can cleanse away. But we must be open and unreserved in our confession to Him. We must put, as it were, our soiled feet into His hands, that He may wash them, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He is girded. We can keep no secrets from Him. The condition of the feet proves where we have been. Deliberately to allow or indulge in anything, whether in thought, word, or deed, that is contrary to Him, defiles the conscience, hinders communion, and weakens our Christian energies. But in the midst of much conscious weakness and failure, even with much watchfulness, let us not forget the blessed truth—the rest-giving truth—that Christ is our *sanctification*. In the sin-offering, we see Him as our sin-bearer; in the burnt-offering, as our risen life and acceptance; and in the laver as our complete sanctification. “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and *sanctification*, and redemption.” 1 Cor. i. 30.

True, He has gone to heaven, but He thinks of us there. The glory of the upper sanctuary takes not away His heart from us, nor hinders Him from waiting upon us in our need. “He loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph. v. 25, 26.) This is what He is doing now, though in glory. But His love is the spring of all, and He willingly serves for the end which He has in view. Thy love, O most blessed Lord, is unwearied, in spite

of all our carelessness, or even our heartlessness. We stand "clean every whit" before the face of God; through Thy precious blood; and now Thou art careful to maintain us in communion and service by the water of purification: but both, we know, flowed from Thy wounded side. Blessed fruits of Thy death for us!

Should not thy daily experience, O my soul, tend to deepen thy love and esteem for thy Lord? and should it not also lead thee to greater watchfulness and self-denial, lest thou shouldst grieve Him? "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked—to purify himself even as he is pure." How couldst thou get on one hour without Him? Think on thy many unworthy thoughts and feelings, not to speak of thy doings. And yet He keeps thee clean—"clean every whit"—clean according to the presence of God—clean according to all those relationships into which thou hast entered in Him. He girds Himself for this lowly service, though in heaven, and He restores communion and power to serve God, by the Holy Ghost and the word. Oh wondrous, gracious, matchless love, that can thus serve in spite of everything! "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John ii. 1.

We now approach, through the door of the tent, to the *golden altar*. By regeneration we enter into an entirely new state of things. "I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." (Psalm xxvi. 6.) There were two altars; the

“brazen altar,” and the “golden altar.” To those, no doubt, the psalmist refers, when he says, “Even thine *altars*, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.” Both were made of shittim wood, which sets forth, the holy humanity, the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all His work for us, and of all our blessing in Him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The *overlaying* shadows forth His Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory.

At the brazen altar, we see the lowly Jesus, presenting Himself of His own voluntary will, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God. Infinite holiness and justice feed upon the ascending offering, with perfect complacency; and grace—boundless grace—flows out from the God of righteousness to the chief of sinners. It is a sweet savour of rest to God—“God is glorified in him.” And it is the ground of the believer’s relationship, acceptance, and fellowship with God and the Father.

At the golden altar, we see the *once lowly Jesus* crowned with glory and honour. It is now the *exalted Christ* in His ascended glory who ever lives to make intercession for us. The brazen altar had no crown, but the golden altar had “a crown of gold round about.” In His humiliation He was mocked with a crown of thorns; in His exaltation He is crowned with glory.

The golden altar is the symbol of priestly worship.

There is no question here of pardon, of personal acceptance, or of sanctification. These important questions were all settled outside the house of God. Praise, thanksgiving, adoration, worship, ascend to God continually from the golden altar. Our prayers and our praises come up before God, in all the sweet fragrance of the ascending incense. When the holy fire of God tested the sweet incense "beaten small," it found nothing there but the rich fragrance of the preciousness of Christ. But when the same fire tested Nadab and Abihu, alas! for poor fallen nature, no sweet incense was found there. "Our God is a consuming fire." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*" O reader, is thy peace made with God? If not, Kiss the Son—be reconciled to the Son—be friends with the Son, before the testing time with the holy fires of God's justice come to thee. "Our God is a consuming fire." But when the holy fire of God's judgment tests the Son, all ascends as sweet incense. Nothing but perfection is found in the Man Christ Jesus. His Person, work, character, and ways, all, all ascend to God as a sweet-smelling savour; and, oh! blessed be His name, the prayers and praises of the friends of the Son ascend, and are accepted, and shall be fragrant for ever in His sweetness.

UNWORTHY is thanksgiving, a service stained with sin,
Except as Thou art living, our Priest to bear it in.
In every act of worship, in every loving deed,
Our thoughts around Thee centre, as meeting all our need.

M

A bond that nought can sever has fixed us on the rock, —
Sin put away for ever, for all the Shepherd's flock ;
And, Lord, Thy perfect fitness to do a Saviour's part,
The Holy Ghost doth witness to each believer's heart.

As dews that fall on Hermon refreshing all below,
The Spirit's holy unction doth all Thy beauty show.
Ah then, how good and pleasant to worship, serve, and love,
To rise o'er all things present, and taste the joys above.

Having thus glanced at what our beautiful psalm alludes to, we can now better understand the exclamation of the psalmist in the fourth verse : "*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house ; they will be still praising thee.*" Blessed indeed, we too may exclaim, and blessed shall they be for ever. They are *dwellers*, not *visitors*, in God's house. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This is true, blessedly true, of all who trust in Jesus now. But though God's children are all priests by birth, as were the sons of Aaron, they are not all, alas ! priests by consecration. (See Exod. xxix.) Comparatively few know their priestly place at the golden altar. Many of them are doubting as to whether their sins, root and branch, were all consumed outside the camp ; and, consequently, such are afraid to come within the court, and as for being assured of their full justification and sanctification in the risen One, they gravely doubt and fear that such blessedness can ever be their happy lot. Hence that state of soul which answers to priestly consecration at the laver, and happy worship at the golden altar, is unknown and unenjoyed. They are not priests by consecration.

Our text is plain. "They will be still praising thee." Doubts, fears, unsettled questions, all are gone. Such cannot exist in the holy place. All, of course, who are in Christ must be, in God's account, where He is; but all who believe in Christ, do not know and believe that they are *in Him*, as being *one with Him now*. When the state of our souls answers to what is symbolized by the holy place, we can only praise. "They that dwell in thy house will be still praising thee." Then we are happily near to God, and have communion with Him, in the glorified Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The symbols of the *holy*, and *most holy* place, speak volumes as to our perfect blessedness in Christ. On the one side, as we worship at the golden altar, before the vail, there is the table of shew-bread—the communion table. We are nourished with the bread of life. The incarnate, crucified, risen, and eternally living One, is the centre and source of our communion. We are one with Him in resurrection. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

On the other side, there is the candlestick of pure gold, shedding its sevenfold light on the communion of saints; the centre shaft of pure gold, shadowing forth Him who is the source of all light in testimony, through the power of the Holy Ghost. The rent vail reveals the ark of the covenant; this type was Israel's grand centre of old—the antitype, Christ Himself, is ours now. In fine, the Christian is placed at the very centre of God's wide circle of grace and glory, but he cannot see—he can never see its limit.

With a full heart, and a thankful heart, thou canst truly exclaim, O my soul, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." But the heart does also exclaim, "Oh, why do so many still stand outside? Why do so many still prefer the wretched husks of the far country, to the fatted calf in the Father's house?" Still there is room—still there is an open door—still there is a ready welcome—and still the voice of unwearied love cries, and cries to all who will listen to His voice—"Come, come, enter while there is room—him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." May God clothe with power His own word, both spoken and written, that many precious, immortal souls may be gathered in! Amen.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are the ways of them." The great secret of strength in the ways of God, is the full assurance of His love. When we have learnt the love that gave Jesus to die for us, and the Holy Ghost to quicken and teach us, we shall be content to trust the ordering of all things for our journey homeward to Him. This is the strength of God in the soul, and this alone will give good heart for the way in which He leads, be it rough or smooth. What else could make the weary pilgrim sing on his lonely way, or the martyr glorify God in the fire? True, it is the way in which the cross is found, but it is God's way—the way home, and the heart is in it.

The desires of the renewed soul, we know, can never be fully satisfied until it reaches the Father's house on high; but till then, the way thither must

be the main thing with the heart. Here pause for a little, O my soul, and meditate on this great truth. It is of daily, hourly importance, see that thou understandest it well. It will give strength and courage to thy heart, decision and firmness to thy feet, and consistency to all thy path. Do, I pray thee, dwell upon it, and dismiss it not till thou hast comprehended its meaning. Forget not the blessing here given. "BLESSED are they that dwell in thy house. . . . BLESSED is the man whose strength is in thee." Let all, then, who are now passing through the valley of Baca, comfort and strengthen themselves in the blessing of their God and Father. Who can explain the fulness of that word "*blessed*," when thus used of Him? And think not because the great truths of this beautiful psalm are expressed in Jewish style, that their full spiritual bearing applies not to thee. God and His love—Christ and His sympathy—the Holy Ghost and His ministry—home and the way thither, are subjects for the heart, and not confined to any particular dispensation.

God alone is the strength of His people's heart from first to last. For example, when the returning wanderer knows and counts upon his father's love, his heart will be in the way that takes him home. The road may be rough and dreary, and he may have many smittings of conscience for his past undutifulness, but the thought that his father's house is at the far end of it, is strength for the way, whatever the difficulties may be. Already he sees the overflowings of his father's heart, and the rough path is smoothed—the long way is shortened. The beautiful green

lanes and flowery paths which lead in another direction have no attraction for him now. Once, alas! they had, but not now—they lead not to home, his heart is set on his father's house.

This is the Christian's shield—unwavering confidence, in spite of everything, in the unchangeable love of God his Father. The full assurance of heart that He changeth not is the invulnerable shield of the pilgrim. To question God's love in the trial, is to drop his shield, and expose his heart to the fiery darts of the devil. Every circumstance may seem as if the Lord were chastening in anger, but faith rises above the circumstances, and affirms that it is all in perfect love. How often has the timid though sincere Christian been so tempted to doubt the Father's love in the trial, that all strength for the journey seemed gone. He has felt as if he could only sit down and weep in despair.

"Is this love?" whispers the arch-fiend, to the bereaved heart. What purpose could it serve to take that loved, useful, and needed one away? Who can fill his or her place? Earth never can, you know. Is this what you call love? Can you believe that this is love to you? And the poor, weakly, bed-ridden one, he will also be sure to tempt to impatience and to hard thoughts of God. Such are the wicked suggestions—the poisoned arrows of the enemy; and which are sure to fly thick and fast into the unguarded soul, especially at a time when the heart is overwhelmed with sorrow, or sorely tried by repeated disappointment. Nothing but the shield of faith can quench such darts of unbelief. Nevertheless, faith

will always vindicate God and His truth, however heavy or sweeping the stroke. It will calmly rest in the truth, that the Father's love is the same—the same as when He gave His well beloved Son to die on Calvary. Before such faith, all enemies and temptations are powerless.

But sometimes, in trials of lesser weight, the Christian may be more off his guard, and the enemy more successful. His great object always is to weaken the believer's confidence in the kindness of God. The way to the Father's house *leads out of the world*, and so it must always be a path of trial, disappointment, and difficulty. When dwelling in the house, as the psalmist says, we can only praise; but when on the way to it, we may have great conflict. Hence it is, that when we now realize, in the power of the Spirit, our oneness with Christ in the presence of God, we can only worship and adore; but when meeting the practical difficulties of life, we may have much to confess and pray for.

Take an example—a common case. The young Christian has scarcely entered on the path of obedience to the Lord, when he loses his situation. He may have filled it for years, and all went smoothly on, but his heart is now in the ways of God according to His word, and he cannot bend so easily to certain things formerly required, which he now sees have not the sanction of God's word. Everything becomes changed: to walk and act according to the word tests all. So long as the believer walks according to traditional habits, the cross is avoided. He may not think that the word condemns anything

he does, but when he has been enabled to lay aside tradition, and to be guided only by the word of God, he finds out the difference. Such strictness, almost everywhere, is felt by others to be an inconvenience, and very soon unbearable. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12.

Such is often the form in which the cross has to be taken up at the present time. Nevertheless, it is a real cross, and one by which the enemy will seek to dishearten the young Christian. He may be reduced to straits, and everything may seem to go against him. His trials thicken, and all looks dark. He begins to question if he has taken the right path—if he has really had Divine guidance. Even his nearest kindred may little understand his course, and reproach him with being righteous overmuch. Confidence in all, save in God Himself, is now gone. What a breaking down and sweeping away of all earthly and fleshly resources!

Now, we may say, he enters the valley of Baca; it is the place, not only of trial, but of tears. He is brought into deep exercise of soul before God. Self is judged. This is the young Christian's valley of Baca. It is the *exercise* of soul, rather than the *trial*, that makes it a well—that digs the pools. He has now found out that a desire to live to God's glory may turn the fairest scenes and the brightest prospects of earth into a vale of tears—a place of humiliation and sorrow. But if there be simple faith in God, the dreariest part of the desert may become a fruitful field, and where nothing but disappointment

and distress were expected, the richest blessings may be found. But on the other hand, if he gets under the power of his circumstances, and is tempted to look to the world or the flesh as a resource, his tears will be yet more bitter, and more abundant. The trial, no doubt, is enough to test the strongest faith and the bravest heart, especially if we have to wait long for the answer to our prayers. But our God will have us to confide in His love alone, and to learn what He is to us, however painful the process.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." This is God's way out of the world; hence the trial to nature. The great moral system of Satan in the world must be faced, and this is no easy matter. The strongest link that binds us to it must be broken, the cord that is nearest to the heart may have to be cut asunder. Thus it is called the valley of tears. The path of many for a long way, if not all the way, is watered with tears. Scarcely has the joy of conversion been tasted, in many cases, when the pain of separation from the world in some of its tenderest associations must be experienced. And how often unfaithfulness in this respect hinders the good work of God in the soul, and mars its sweetest joys! But the idol of the heart must be given up, and the heart unreservedly given to Christ. But now, the joy and the sorrow together break up the very fountains of the poor human heart, and every footstep is watered with tears. Thus all have a valley of Baca to pass through; it is the way to Zion. Even the most

spiritual and devoted of the Lord's people must have the exercises of the valley.

Take two examples from Scripture: Paul's thorn in the flesh, and the bereavement of the sisters at Bethany. 1. The thorn in the flesh was truly humbling to the great apostle. This is evident from what he says to the Galatians, "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not." It was something that made him despicable as a preacher. And he thought, no doubt, that it would greatly hinder his usefulness; but he had to learn that the great hindrance to usefulness is the flesh. Thrice he prayed that the thorn might be removed. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." 2 Cor. xii.

What a solemn, weighty, terrible truth this is, for all the Lord's servants! Weigh it well, O my soul, learn the badness of thy flesh—it is incorrigible! The flesh will make a bad use of God's purest mercies. Paul might have boasted that he had been in the third heavens, and that no one had ever been there but himself. But the Lord, in great mercy to His dear servant, met the danger in humbling him. Doubtless, He could have met it otherwise, but this was the way of His love and His wisdom. O, Lord, may this painful lesson be well weighed by all Thy servants. The flesh, we see, in the best—in all, is only a hindrance in service. Oh! what need, my

soul, to be daily judging the old nature, and to be daily growing in grace, by feeding on Christ's fulness.

The valley of humiliation and sorrow became the place of blessing to the apostle : " And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When he heard these gracious words, he no longer prayed for the thorn to be taken away. Now he glories in that which had been so painful and humbling to him. " Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now he rests in the love that had ordered everything for him, and on the all-sufficiency of the Lord who was with him. In fine, he found the valley to be a well of rich blessing ; rain from heaven filled the pools. When caught up to the third heavens, he found the Lord there ; and now while in the depths he finds the same blessed One with him there. What nearness to—what intimacy with the Lord ! He knows Him on the heights and in the depths. What experience—a man in Christ in the third heavens, Christ with a man in the place of nature's weakness and sorrow ! Nevertheless, Paul is in the valley of Baca, but He makes it a well, and showers from heaven fill the pools. Our blessing comes from that which has humbled us—emptied us, and taught us that difficulties and impossibilities are nothing to the Lord.

2. We turn now to the sisters in Bethany. They were much bowed down under the pressure of their circumstances. In their deep affliction they counted on the Lord's love and sympathy ; they send for Him, and say, " He whom thou lovest is sick." But

in place of answering their prayer according to the desires of their hearts, and with all speed, He seems rather to turn away from them, and go somewhere else. Such delays are a great trial to faith and patience. But He was teaching them to wait His time, and on Him alone. We cannot hurry Him. "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, let us go into Judea again." The sisters were passing through deep waters, it was indeed a vale of tears ; but

" HIS TEARS ere long shall hush that fear
For every heavy heart for ever ;
And we, who now His words can hear
Beyond the hills, beyond the river,

Know that as true a watch He kept
On those far heights, as at their side ;
Feeling the tears the sisters wept,
Marking the hour the brother died.

No faintest sigh His heart can miss ;
E'en now His feet are on the way,
With richest counter-weight of bliss
Heaped up for every hour's delay."

The Lord cannot change. Blessed, blessed truth for the sorrowing heart ! But their feelings rose above their faith, and their hearts fell below their circumstances. Hence, they were disposed to blame the Lord for not coming when they sent for Him. Both Martha and Mary said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But greater things than healing the sick, were now filling His mind and the scene before Him. He could have said the word,

as on other occasions, and Lazarus would have been healed ; but, no ; He acts “ for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified thereby.” And when the right time was come, He takes His place in the scene of death, in resurrection power and glory. Lazarus is dead—Israel is dead—man is dead—the sisters are bereaved and desolate. But the Lord is equal to all the need. The whole scene is filled with His glory. The bursting tomb, the rising Lazarus, radiate His glory as the Son of God. By that voice, “ Lazarus, come forth,” the deep caverns of the grave are pierced, and the sleeping dust awakes. What a testimony to the unbelieving Jews ! What a rebuke to the unbelief of Martha and Mary—to the unbelief of us all in the time of affliction ! He bestows life, raises the dead, glorifies God, and mingles His tears with the sorrowing ones. The mighty power of God, and the tenderest human affections, are perfectly displayed in this wondrous scene. O ! what a meeting of the whole need of the heart—what a filling up of the pools—what showers of blessing from above are provided for all pilgrims, in all ages, when travelling through all parts of this vale of tears !

“ O blessed solace ! 'Tis a Father's rod—
No rod of wrath—but of unchanging love,
No stroke inflicted which He could have spared !
Infinite wisdom has with love combined
To make the blow accomplish—and no more—
Its salutary end. A Father's rod ;
The thought suppresses every falling tear—
Checks every murmur—mitigates each pang.
Unerring Parent !—Mourner ! can you doubt
His faithfulness ? Then look to Calvary !

Behold that bleeding, dying Lamb of God !
 'Twas love for thee that sent Him from His throne,
 And nailed Him there ! And dare we entertain
 The thought, that He whose nature and whose name
 Is LOVE, could send us one superfluous pang,
 Impose a needless burden, or permit
 The thorn to pierce He knew would pierce in vain !
 That cross becomes the blessed guarantee
 That all is needed ! Mercy infinite
 Prevents one drop from mingling in the cup
 Which could have been withheld. Thou God of love !
 Vouchsafe us grace to bow beneath Thy rod ;
 And breathe—although it be through burning tears,
 And half-choked utterance—‘ **THY WILL BE DONE.** ’ ”
Wells of Baca.

Ver. 7. “ *They go from strength to strength ; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.* ” Blessed indeed is the way, rough or smooth, that leads to such a glorious end—before God, in Zion—the centre of grace and glory. But it seems strange, at first sight, that pilgrims should find strength for such a journey in the valley of tears—the place of self-mortification. And yet, we may say, they could find it, in like manner, nowhere else. We are strengthened through faith in the risen Christ, and in reckoning our old nature as crucified by His cross. Never, until we enter into the great truth of the cross, and a risen Christ, is the strength of God perfected in us. This is the blessed teaching, though crushing work, of the valley. “ When I am weak,” as the apostle says, “ then am I strong.” We go, as it were, from weakness to weakness, and yet, from strength to strength. It is not merely in Paul as the Lord’s

servant that this grace so wonderfully shines forth, but in his *felt, conscious weakness*.

This is carefully to be noted. It is worthy of thy deepest meditation, O my soul. There is no truth more practical in the Christian's history, and none, we fear, less understood, or longer in being reached. "My strength," says the Lord, "is made perfect," not merely in my apostle, or in my servant, or in my disciple, but "in weakness." There must be acknowledged weakness before there can be known strength. But, oh! what a time we are in learning *even a little* of this lesson, though we have a Divine Teacher. Mark the great hindrance to progress from the lowest form in the school of Christ.

Why does that newly-awakened soul refuse to believe God's word, though weeping sore to know His mind? Just because *self* is in the way, and the work of the cross is not yet learnt. Self and its feelings are treated by the anxious one as of higher authority, and more to be trusted, than the word of God. What a place to give, we may well exclaim, to mere human feelings! But how often have we heard, from the lips of such, these words, "If I could *feel* that I am pardoned, I would *believe* it." This is vain, important, unjudged self. It sits on high, and judges everything as below it. And this distrustful nature and opposition to God have not yet been detected by the awakened soul! And, of course, while this is the case, there can be no peace, no rest, no assurance of salvation enjoyed. Dark despair, oftentimes, seems near at hand; and the darkness and the despair will be in proportion to the reality of God's work in the

soul. The more real the work, the more real the distress, if self be in the way. And this state of things must continue, so long as the voice of self is listened to. It matters not what blessed things the Lord says to such in His word; they all go for nothing, until self be set aside as an utterly condemned thing by the cross. This is the most subtle of Satan's snares, both with young and old.

The word of the Lord is before the soul in all its plainness and fulness. It meets every case, condition, and state. The light of a cloudless sky shines on them all. But, no; it matters not. Self refuses to yield. It will readily acknowledge God's word to be true; but still says, "It is not true to me yet, for I have not experienced that change *within* which warrants me to believe that it is true to me." This state of mind may seem humble, but it is really pride—it is unbroken self resisting God and His word. But the controversy must go on until self is subdued. God will never yield the point—the soul must. But that may not be until after many tears and sighs, and sleepless nights. Let us mark for a moment the struggle.

God says to the awakened, restless soul, "Believe my word, and you shall be perfectly happy." "No," replies the soul, "first give me to feel an *inward change* that the word is true to me, and then I will believe it." "What!" God again says, "is not my word true whatever your feelings may be! Can any *inward change* make my word more true than it is! Why should you ask for any token that my word is true?" But again the soul will venture to say, "How

can I *believe* unless I *feel*?" Once more God graciously replies, "How can you *feel* unless you *believe*?" Thus the sorrowful struggle goes on, until self is lost sight of and the word of God received as the answer of His love to the anxious soul. He waits patiently in His love, until His word is believed without the feelings, for that is what it must come to in all, sooner or later. In some cases the struggle is short, in others it may last a life-time. This depends on the simplicity of faith; for the feelings, so much desired, can only be produced by means of the written word received into the heart. Oh! that we could persuade every weary one to have done with self, and to rest entirely on the sure word of God; then would they have rest and peace and joy; and then, too, they would be strong for labour in the service of Christ.

The practical importance of this point cannot be over-estimated. Thousands of true believers are kept in a state of uncertainty, through looking to themselves in place of looking to Christ, or through looking to their feelings instead of listening to His word. And the unhappy consequence is, that they bear little testimony for Christ, and do little service for Him; they are so much occupied with good-for-nothing self, that the best things are lost sight of. Thus the enemy gains an advantage. Oh, that we may ever remember, that all *our blessing flows from the grace of God, and securely rests upon His word!* And that word can never be truer or plainer than it is *now*. Of course, we shall, by-and-by, understand it better; but our knowledge of the word is the *fruit* of faith, not the *ground* of it. Faith bows to God's word,

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and sets to its seal that He is true. Sweetly entering into its depths, or discovering its treasures, comes afterwards. We must wait on God, that He, by the Holy Spirit, may shed Divine light on the infiniteness of His own word.

"Thy faith hath saved thee," is the plain word of God to all, without exception, who come to Christ—who believe in Him. Having been brought to see our need as sinners, and to trust in Jesus, the full blessing of God is ours. *"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."* Faith believes it just because God says it, and the feelings follow. The good news fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. When self has been silenced, and the word of God allowed its right place in the heart, the believer enters, in measure, into the very joys of heaven. The precious word of God will not be truer there. Therefore we ought to know our blessing *now* as perfectly, though not so fully, as we shall do when enthroned and crowned in glory. But before this happy condition of soul is enjoyed, self, or the flesh, must be judged, broken, and mortified. This needed work of self-judgment must begin with conversion, and never cease while we are here. It is founded on the work of the cross. There God judged the sin of our nature, and our many actual sins. (Rom. viii. 3, Heb. ix. 28, 1 Pet. ii. 24.) We should have the same thoughts of sin and self, and Christ and the cross, as He has.

The valley of Baca sets forth the place of blessing through deep exercise of soul. When self is broken down and distrusted, we go from strength to strength,

until we appear before God in Zion. When delivered from the galling bondage of self-occupation, and the heart is happy in the liberty of Christ, we have made a fair start on our journey homewards, and great blessing will be our daily portion. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." Ver. 5.

In verse 6, we have that which characterizes the way home; "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." And in verse 8 we have the precious fruits and rich experience of the wilderness journey described: "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

All the males of the tribes of Israel were commanded to appear before God in Jerusalem three times a year. The godly women, such as Hannah and Mary, though not bound by law to go, seem to have gone also: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles." Deut. xvi. 16.

The psalmist, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, meditates in his solitude on these journeyings. He sees, in vision, the different tribes going up to the worship of Jehovah. His heart, like the heart of every true Israelite, longs to join them. They are in the way of blessing. In this respect, the spiritual instruction of the psalm applies to the Christian as well as to the Jew. The ways of God are always ways of blessing to the soul. Doubtless

these annual feasts were seasons of the deepest interest to Israel. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem . . . Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxxii.) The numbers going up to worship must have been, at times, very large. This is plain from Luke ii. 44, "But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance." The many little companies meeting each other would greatly increase the general company, as they approached the city of solemnities. Brother meeting brother, and friend meeting friend, must have been the occasion of many tears, both of joy and of sorrow.

"Blessed, who, their strength on Thee reclined,
Thy seat explore with constant mind,
And, Salem's distant towers in view,
With active zeal their way pursue;
Secure the thirsty vale they tread,
While, called from out their sandy bed—
As down in grateful showers distilled,
The heavens their kindest moisture yield—
The copious springs their steps beguile,
And bid the cheerless desert smile.
From stage to stage advancing still,
Behold them reach fair Zion's hill,
And, prostrate at the hallowed shrine,
Adore the Majesty Divine."*

As pilgrims and strangers in the valley, they met each other. They were now far from home; but

* Merrick's Metrical Version of the Psalms.

they had one common feeling, one common joy, and one common hope. They were all journeying to the same glorious city, the same temple, and the same God. And great must have been their delight when, worn and weary with the wilderness, they caught a glimpse of the towers and palaces of their beloved Zion. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." (Ps. xlviii.) Thus it is with the Christian, through the bright gleams of his blessed hope.

"Mother of cities! o'er thy head
See peace, with healing wings outspread,
Delighted fix her stay.
How blest who calls himself thy friend!
Success his labours shall attend,
And safety guard his way.

"Thy walls, remote from hostile fear,
Nor the loud voice of tumult hear,
Nor war's wild wastes deplore:
Here smiling plenty takes her stand,
And in thy courts with lavish hand
Has poured forth all her store."

In these touching scenes of Israel's past history, we have their future glory brightly foreshadowed, and also the Christian's path through this world strikingly illustrated. But there is always this great difference between the Jew and the Christian—"We walk by faith, not by sight." The Jews' religion was chiefly by sight. "The law is not of faith." But, alas, there is a great deal of that which is Jewish as well as Christian in many believers. Hence the large place that feelings, doings, and ceremonies have with many.

It is only by faith that we know our pardon, acceptance, and peace with God. And without the knowledge of these, there can be no strength for the journey, and no happy enjoyment of God Himself in Zion—in the riches of His grace. As all blessing flows from the grace of God, and is all founded on the cross of Christ, so it all rests on His word. And the Holy Spirit, by whom we are quickened and taught, is given in connection with faith. “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. iii. 2.) The great doctrine of *life in Christ*, as unfolded by the apostle in the second chapter, and its kindred subject, “the Spirit,” in the third, are both received, entered into, and enjoyed by faith. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Whether it be “life” or “the Spirit”—eternal life, or the witness of the Spirit—both are known, and can only be known, by faith. They are matters of revelation in the word, not merely of feelings in the soul. True, most true, the feelings will follow, and answer to the truth believed. Faith and feeling go together; but faith must always have the *first place*. Faith, experience, and practice form the threefold cord of practical Christianity.

Would to God we *knew* more of this—*saw* more of this! Meditate thereon, O my soul, and let thy one desire be, to give a living manifestation thereof, to thy Master’s glory. God grant that these three things may never be separated in His children! Bear in mind for thyself, O my soul, that wonderful word,

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. iv. 13.) Here observe, and carefully note, that it is through faith in the *risen Christ*, that we go from strength to strength. The risen Christ, victorious over every foe, is the strength of the Christian for his journey through this world. He has his *motive* to devotedness, in the once lowly Jesus, and *strength* for walk in the now exalted Christ of God. “He loved me and gave himself for me” is surely enough to command the entire consecration of the heart and life to Him. It is easy to give our hearts to Jesus, when once we see that He gave His heart for us. But our strength from day to day, and from one stage of our journey to another, is in the risen, triumphant, glorified Christ. Blessed Lord—my Lord—Jesus—Christ—I need Thee in all thy names and titles—I need Thee as my Jesus—my powerful motive for this sluggish—this carnal—ease-loving heart of mine. I need Thee as my Christ on high, with every enemy beneath Thy feet, and beneath mine too, as one with Thee. I need Thee as my Lord—my sovereign Lord—my coming Lord—my blessed hope, amidst all that would entangle and hinder me down here. Oh let my affections be governed, and my character formed, by my knowledge of Thee as my Lord, Jesus, Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost!

The Christian’s blessing, whether it be strength for the journey, or the enjoyment of God in the Zion above, is all by faith. This is the great principle of the believer’s action, and of his whole history on the earth. His going from strength to strength, and his

entering into the fulness of grace (Zion is the symbol of grace in royalty—*royal grace*—2 Sam. v.), is by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence, the tone of his spiritual condition rises or falls, according to the simplicity and reality of his faith. It enters into everything—it corrects everything—it characterizes everything. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. xiv. 23.) If this weighty truth be duly considered, the Christian will sometimes be brought to a *halt* on his journey. For the moment, at times, he has no word of direction. What is he to do? Go on without it? God forbid! This would be unlike his Lord, who ever waited till the word came. “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* of God.” The word had not come—the Saviour would not eat. What must His disciples do in such a case? Stand still. And it is often very good for the soul thus to stand still. To go on without the word would be to go from weakness to weakness, and not from strength to strength; and, further, it would be to lose the sense of grace—royal grace. He must now wait on God—self-judgment follows—the eye becomes single—the whole body full of light; and now he goes on his way rejoicing.

The importance of the principle of faith is great, for it includes not merely justification, but the walk of the Christian in every way, both sacred and secular. So great, so minute, so practical, is this principle, that it is plainly said, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” The well-known eleventh chapter of Hebrews is an illustration and proof of

this, though the witnesses are selected from the Old Testament. It was by faith that the elders obtained a good report.

Here, for a little, O my soul, meditate on this deeply practical truth—a truth fraught with such important results. This will be thy health and strength in Divine things. Lord, give me grace patiently to study Thy word, and implicitly to bow to its teaching. And may the light of Thy Holy Spirit so shine on what Thou hast revealed, that I may see its true meaning and its present application.

But why, it may be asked, so press this point? Do not all Christians most surely believe the Holy Scriptures? True, so far; and it is of such we speak. We are not thinking of the *Rationalist*, but of the true Christian who believes in the plenary inspiration of Scripture—in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. (1 Cor. ii. 13.) But there is so much remaining of what we may call practical unbelief, in many of God's children, that we feel constrained to press the point. It is by implicit, unquestioning faith in God's word, that we walk in the light of His countenance—that we honour the blessed Lord in His Person and work—that we live and act in the power of an ungrieved Spirit. Surely this is all-important, and worthy of being pressed. Whence come all these doubts, uncertainties, and perplexities, of every shade, and on almost every subject, from the beginning to the end of many a Christian's course? Is it not because of the practical unbelief which still lurks in the heart? And are they not all unworthy of the relation of a child?

Is not the truth of God definite and unchangeable? Why then should that which we call faith be indefinite, uncertain, wavering? True, most true, the word of God demands our most patient, prayerful study, in dependence on the Holy Spirit; and it may be a long time before we understand many parts of it, if ever in this world. Truth, though plainly revealed, is not necessarily plain, even to the spiritually minded, at first sight. Now "we know in part, and we prophesy in part." But should our ignorance, or feeble apprehension of the truth, hinder us from believing it? When grace is at work in the soul, faith rises above all these difficulties, and lays hold on the truth, just because God has revealed it, and receives great blessing thereby. We pay but a poor compliment to the truth of God, when we refuse to receive it *heartily* and *implicitly* because we do not understand it. This is our folly and our pride; nevertheless, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." When the doing of *Christ's will*, not *our own*, is our motive, progress will be sure, if not rapid.

"If I say the truth," answered the blessed Lord to the Jews, "why do ye not believe me?" Here our Lord appeals to the *truth* of His sayings as the ground of faith. It was not a question of their intelligence, but of the truth of what He was saying. Faith, then, is the receiving as true, without question, what God declares in His word to be so. But now, have we not often, in the exercise of self-judgment, detected the absence of implicit faith in certain great truths of God's word, because we do not understand

them, or, as we often say, "we cannot *realize* them?" But what is this really? Is it not unbelief? Simple faith receives God's word as true, absolutely true, whether it be understood or not—realized or not.

But as the object of our meditations on this subject is strictly practical, and for the joy and strength of precious souls, we will illustrate what we mean by a few passages. And first, let us look at the well-known text—"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This is one of the very first truths that a newly awakened soul must learn, if it would make a fair start. But how feebly, alas, do many enter into these great truths, who have been many years converted! Yet nothing possibly can be plainer. But now suppose this truth to be received in the simplicity of faith, what would the effect be? Why, the full assurance that neither sin nor spot remained on the soul. There would be no more conscience of sins, though "in the light, as God is in the light." The purest light of heaven detects no stain on the blood-cleansed soul. The word of God says plainly enough "*all* sin," not *some* sin. Faith receives it as absolutely, unchangeably true, just because it is the word of God. But when the eye is turned away for a moment from the truth, something ventures to suggest the inquiry, "How can this be? how are we to understand it, seeing we are daily liable to sin, in thought, word, and deed?" "That also is true," faith answers. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." But this belongs to another line of thought, to a different range of truth; and the one passage must not be brought for-

ward to weaken the force of the other, far less to make it, as it were, untrue or uncertain. This is the working of the native, lurking unbelief of the heart, under the suggestions of Satan, and must be watched against. It is this kind of unbelief, in its many forms and degrees, that we are now seeking to detect and condemn. It is most weakening and withering to the child of God.

Be on thy guard, precious soul, lest thou shouldst be robbed of the very foundation of thy peace with God. Christ made thy peace by the blood of His cross. It is not now to make, adored and loved be His name. Honour Him with the full, unwavering confidence of thy heart. Always reason from God's heart downwards to thyself, never from the feelings of thine own heart up to Him. Hath not the Spirit of truth said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth *us* from all sin?" But art thou disposed to inquire, who are included in the "*us*," that are so cleansed? Most surely, all who believe in Jesus.

Hold fast this great truth, I pray thee. It is plain, positive, absolute, unchangeable. Suffer not the reasonings of thy natural mind, or other parts of God's word, to weaken its power in thy soul. When the word has gone forth from the lips of eternal truth, it can never be broken. God has said "*all sin*;" believe it. It may be difficult to understand or to explain; it may be opposed to thine own experience; it may be different from much that thou hast learned from other quarters; it may break to pieces some favourite system of doctrine which thou hast been building up. Well, never mind, let all the rest go.

Nothing can either be true or good that contradicts the truth of God. Weigh well the thought—the precious truth—*there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son*. Be not afraid to rest upon it, to proclaim it, to affirm it. Were the heavens over thy head to open, and their full light to shine into thy soul; were every accuser from beneath to beset thee round, and count up thy many sins; and wert thou to appear as a witness against thyself—what then? No refuge could be found either in reasonings or in feelings at such a moment; but faith could rise in the full strength of God's word, nothing daunted, either by the unsullied light of heaven, or by the threatening darkness of hell, and affirm in the confidence of truth—my sins are all forgiven; they are all cleansed away: God sees none; faith sees none; not even a trace of them remains behind. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” This is God's view and God's statement of my case. He can explain it: I am not bound to do so; but I am bound to believe it. And I know, and do proclaim that *there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son*. Couldst thou, O mine enemy, find out many more sins against me, millions more, my answer is, all that thou canst write under the head of *sin*, is gone—yes, and gone for ever. The light of heaven is my witness. God have all the glory, the blood of Christ have all the credit, I am “*in the light as he is in the light*.” “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”—not to heaven merely, but to God. This is

faith, implicit, unquestioning faith in God's word, and nothing more than He is entitled to from all His children. But, oh! what a bright and blessed type of Christianity we should see, compared with what we often meet with, were this the case. We turn now to another passage:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) We ask ourselves, we ask the Christian reader—How far have we entered into the wondrous truth of these words "*in Christ Jesus*"? We believe it, of course, and bless God for it; but who could explain it, save on the principle of faith? and who could receive it, save on the same principle? But even faith, if mixed in any measure with reason or governed by feelings, is greatly enfeebled in its apprehension and enjoyment of the truth. Remaining unbelief mars the blessing. Reason is totally blind here. Nothing but implicit faith receives, grasps, enjoys the blessed truth.

But all is plain and simple to unquestioning faith. If a child puts his ball in a drawer, he knows where it is, and how safe it is. When God says the Christian is *in Christ*, he ought to know where he is and how safe he is. God cannot be mistaken, neither can faith. And if Christ be at God's right hand in heaven, the Christian, in God's sight, is there too. And if Christ be in perfect rest and security there, so is the Christian. And surely, in spite of everything, the truth of God ought to be received without a question. Besides, God graciously condescends to explain to us how this is. The second verse explains the first.

“For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Christ is our life, but He is in resurrection, and free from the law of sin and death. The death and resurrection of Christ wrought the great deliverance for His people. The believer makes this marvellous blessing individual. He does not say, observe, “hath made” them free, or *us* free, but “*me free*.” This is enjoyed, happy liberty. It is the voice of triumph. Now I am free—free as the power of the risen life in Christ can make me—free from the law of sin and death. My standing is no longer in the *first* but in the *last* Adam. Hence the apostle says, verse 9, “Ye are not in the flesh,” or in the first Adam state; but “in Christ Jesus,” or in the last Adam state. Oh! what words are these—“Hath made *me* free,”—yes, “*me*.” I, who was once the miserable man in the seventh chapter, am now the happy man in the eighth—happy in Christ, as the risen, ascended, and glorified Man. God has said it, faith receives it, and the heart enjoys it.

We might select many other passages in illustration of our subject, but we must leave the Christian reader to follow up in his own private meditations this profitable exercise. Let him, for example, examine how far he has entered into the meaning of such passages as, “Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;” “Because as he is, so are we in this world;” “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Eph. ii. 6; 1 John iv. 17; Gal. ii. 20.

“ One Spirit with the Lord :”

The Father's smile of love
Rests ever on the members here,
As on the Head above.

“ One Spirit with the Lord :”

Jesus the glorified
Esteems the Church for which He bled,
His body and His bride.

We now return to our instructive Psalm, and meditate, for a little, on the contrast between the Jew and the Christian, as therein suggested.

The Israelites required to leave their homes, and journey through the valley, in order to appear before God in Zion—the city of David. This was their place of worship. But it may be said of the Christian, that he is toiling through the valley, and reposing on Mount Zion, at the same time. Such are the mysteries of faith. As a matter of *fact*, he is in the world ; as a matter of *experience*, he is in the wilderness ; as a matter of *faith*, he is in heaven. Take an example.

A young Christian may continue to live in the same family after he is converted that he lived in before his conversion. But how changed to him everything is ! The blood of the Lamb is on the door-posts of his heart, and he is separated from the world, though still in it. But he can no longer take part in the worldly ways of the family. In following Christ he has become a witness for Him, and this is unbearable. He is blamed for carrying things too far ; all sympathy between him and the family is gone ; now he is an *alien* in his father's house. This is wilderness ex-

perience, and sometimes bitter enough. But amidst it all, he knows his oneness with Christ in heaven, and feeds on Him there. He finds, as it were, that Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan, are all under the same roof. But, with these, he finds the blessed Lord Divinely suited to each. His knowledge of Christ greatly increases. He knows that he is sprinkled with the blood, and thereby sheltered from the world's judgments; the cloud, the manna, and the living water, as suited to the desert, are with him; and he also feeds on the old corn of the land. His motives—his resources—his way of life, are unknown to his own family. Faith only can understand the Christian's position in this world.

Here let thy thoughts dwell for a little, O my soul. What knowest thou, experimentally, of these things? The matter is plain, and must be the experience of all, if the heart be for Christ ONLY. Christ is not in this world; and if the Christian has given up the world for Christ, what has he here? Nothing. What can be plainer? If he has given up all on earth for Christ in heaven, he can have nothing here. This is the Christian's position in the world. He is a stranger, and desolate as to the resources of earth. All must come from Christ, who is now his all and in all. Fellow-pilgrims are his companions, and heaven is his resource. Hence he lives and walks by faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." But the resources of faith are boundless. It lays its hand on the richest treasures of heaven, and says, These are mine—mine in the right of Christ—mine

now—mine for ever. Such is faith; it lays hold on every good thing. Nothing is hidden from it—nothing is kept from it. What grace unfolds, faith appropriates, the heart enjoys, and the life displays. Would to God it were more so—always so! but that is the principle. “All things are yours . . . ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

The term “Zion,” in the verse before us, is one of so much interest and importance, that it demands a special notice. And the more so, because it is often used by ecclesiastical writers, as descriptive of the Church, or as synonymous with the expression, “Church of God.” This we believe is a mistake. It is the chosen seat of royalty during the millennial reign of Christ. The order of events connected with the advancement of David, as God’s elected and anointed king, throws much light on the order of events in that yet future and glorious day. “They go from strength to strength; every one of them in *Zion* appeareth before God.” Whether we view the hill of *Zion* historically, as in connection with David; or devotionally, as in the Psalms; or prophetically, as the throne of the Messiah’s kingly power and glory,—it is a place of great interest and significance.

It is first mentioned in connection with the history of David, when he became king over all Israel. “Nevertheless David took the stronghold of *Zion*; the same is the city of David.” (2 Sam. v. 7.) The Philistines were still in the land, and the people of Israel were in the lowest condition possible. They had chosen a king after their own hearts, and now they were smarting keenly for it. Samuel had faith-

fully warned them, and foretold what the state of things would be, under their self-chosen king. But they refused his counsel, and said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like the nations." (1 Sam. viii.) Such is the obstinacy of self-will: and none are so deaf to all good counsel, or so blind to danger, as self-willed people. "We *will* have a king over us." Surely this was daring and dangerous ground! So it was, and it ended in the most overwhelming disasters. And such must ever be the result, when the unbroken will is allowed to act. Alas! that the Christian should ever be found, in any sphere of life, thus set on having his own will!

The Jews had not that bright, living Example before them that we have. The Master whom we follow could always say "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God . . . Not my will, but thine be done." Besides, what happened to Israel because of their wilfulness has been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Be warned then, O my soul—beware of seeking thine own will. It is always wrong. Besides, remember how blinding and hardening it is. Eyes, ears, reason, affection—all are closed and sealed up, that the will may have its own way. How often it yields not, even in the presence of impending ruin, and to the most earnest pleadings of friendship. Meditate in the view of these things, O my soul, on the path of the obedient One. Follow Him. He hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps. God's will only is good. Thou wilt never seek thine own will in heaven—why here?

But should the Lord suffer thee to have it, as He did Israel of old, it may be for thy sore chastening, that thou mayest learn to say, "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Rather let thy prayer be, "Grant unto me, O Lord, in Thy mercy, a subject will, a chastened spirit, a tender conscience, a subdued heart, for Thine own name's sake."

"He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will."

Israel could scarcely have been in a state of greater confusion and ruin than when David established his throne on mount Zion. Both the kingly and priestly departments of the nation were in great disorder. The sanctuary was defiled, the priesthood corrupted, the ark of God in captivity, and "Ichabod" written on the whole scene—the glory had departed. For this terrible state of things there was no hope, no resource, in Israel. But God in mercy interposes. He calls out David, a man after His own heart. He awakes, as it were, out of sleep. The language of Psalm lxxviii. on this particular point is remarkable. "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover, he refused

the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but *chose* the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion, which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he had established for ever. . He *chose* David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."

Saul was a king after the people's *will*, David after God's *heart*. Not that David always *acted* according to the heart of God; but he was *chosen* of Him. David, alas! failed, and failed grievously; and needed the mercy and forgiveness of God. Nevertheless, we often find the heart of David responding to the heart of God in a very blessed way. And who ever felt his sin more keenly than David, or confessed it more fully? Or who ever counted more thoroughly on the goodness of God for pardon and restoration? In short, he understood in a remarkable way the heart of God, and the grace that dwells there.

After David had taken possession of Jerusalem, the Philistines eyed him with jealousy. He inquires of the Lord, follows Divine directions, goes out to battle, and gains signal victories over them. God is with him, and directs the movements of his army. The people, under David as their leader, triumph over their enemies. A great deliverance is wrought in Israel. The downward course of things is stayed, and Zion becomes the hope of the people—the resting-place of faith. The grace of God has done it. The people are

greatly blessed. They find out that it is better to follow the Lord's will than their own.

David becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, not only in His rejection and suffering, but in His victories. The Lord will make war with His enemies, immediately before the establishment of the millennial kingdom. The Lord will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist, and those confederated with him; but, like David, after His throne is established in Zion, there will still be enemies outside of the land of Israel to subdue. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." (Ps. cx.) And also, as under David the people triumphed over their enemies, so will they under Christ. "For the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the day of battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them: for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord." Zech. x. 3—7.

All this, clearly enough, is future. It must take place *after* the appearing of the Lord in glory, and

before the Solomon character of His reign is established. The early part of Christ's reign will be the antitype of David's—the warrior king; Solomon typifies Christ reigning in millennial peace and glory. But we cannot pursue this subject at present, we must return to David.

Another thing now fills and occupies his mind. He was a man of faith before God, as well as a man of power before his enemies. His throne was now established in power on mount Zion, but the *ark of God* still dwelt in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. The ark of the covenant was the visible link of God's relationship with His people. Hence the loss of the ark was the "Ichabod" of Israel. And now, having prevailed over his enemies, and united all Israel under his sceptre, his heart longs to restore the ark to the tabernacle which he had pitched for it on the hill of Zion. Here the faith and piety of David shine most brightly; and never in stronger contrast than with the house of Saul. Michal, like her father, cared nothing in heart for the glory of God. But David rejoiced to humble himself before the Lord, and reproved Michal in the strongest way. He cared for the glory of God, and the welfare of His people. Neither Michal nor her father's house cared either for the one or the other. They never understood the claims of the God of Israel. They thought only of themselves. But how different it was with David! At the prospect of the ark entering the city, his heart leaps with joy. But if we would know more fully the feelings of David on this occasion we must study carefully Psalm cxxxii. There the Spirit of God

records them as an everlasting memorial of his devotedness to God and to His people! He "danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house." 2 Sam. vi.

This was a glorious day for Israel. The long, dark night of "Ichabod" had passed away. The connection between God and His people was re-established. The bonds of the covenant were restored. The presence, power, and glory of the God of Israel are now with the nation. The people are greatly blessed. They have seen a sample of the glory, and tasted the blessings of the Melchizedek reign. David acts as priest. He wears a linen ephod. He is the head of the people. And now the throne of the king and the ark of God are both established on mount Zion. Hence it is that Zion acquires such an immense importance ever after. It becomes God's centre in the Holy Land: there the tribes of

Israel are gathered together, every one of them appearing before God in Zion. It is also the standing witness to all nations, of the activities of God's love on behalf of His people, when all was lost under law. This is the grand principle of Zion; and thereby, it becomes to faith the Divine guarantee of what God will do for His people in the latter day. This is clear from Revelation xiv.—“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads.” The suffering, God-fearing remnant of the latter day, will be associated with the Messiah in His kingly glory, as the faithful in Israel were with David of old. The centre of His dominion and glory is the mount Zion which He loved. There the Lamb shall reign, and they follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Bright, blessed, glorious reward for sharing His rejection—for patiently waiting, in holy separation from the world, for His coming!

“He who, with hands uplifted,
Went from this earth below,
Shall come again, all gifted,
His blessing to bestow.”

Here, O my soul, bow, worship, meditate. Thou art in the presence of a greater than David, and of One better known to thy heart. He is thy Lord, worship thou Him. In type, principle, and detail, learn of David. Himself and his history at this part are full of Christ. Mark the order of events, and learn thereby something of that which is yet to come. The end may be near; faith says it surely is. Then,

O wondrous thought, thou wilt be more than a student of the past; thou wilt have thy part in the scene. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him, in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) But knowest thou meantime, O my soul, thy Christian privileges? We *have* come to Zion *now*. By faith, in spirit, we are already come to mount Zion. Sinai is the type of man's responsibility, Zion of God's grace. What a difference: "But ye *are come* unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. xii. 22—24.

What are these many glories to which we are come—into which grace has introduced us? we may well exclaim. Blessed, indeed, are all they who *now* believe in Christ, and who are *now* brought, in *Him*, into all this wondrous glory! Such is the present portion of all who trust in Jesus. The Lord grant to any who may read this paper to feel their need of Christ, and to be without rest or peace until they find both in Him. He waits to be gracious; why should any refuse such a portion? Look again, dear reader, at these verses in Hebrews xii. To know now, even now, that we *are* come to all this—that we *are* interested in all this, and that there is no fear of things going wrong in heaven, as they have done in

Israel, is the soul's present rest, peace, joy, and happiness. Surely it is no small matter to belong *now* to the Church of the first-born ones, whose names are registered in heaven! The Church is blessed in Christ and with Christ; and all who are converted now, are called, not only to the nuptial glories of the Lamb, but to the eternal blessedness of the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Know, then, I pray thee, thy need as a lost sinner now; think of the love of Jesus in dying for such—for thee. Dost thou prefer thy sins and this world to forgiveness and Christ? Oh, if such be the case, what must the end be? Plainly, my dear reader, dost thou prefer the pains of hell for ever, to that place of peculiar honour, blessedness, and affection, to which the Church of the first-born are called? What! prefer the blackness of darkness for ever, to the light and holiness of heaven! No. I am well aware thou wouldst not say so in so many words; but do not actions speak louder than words? Break, oh break, at once and for ever, with everything that would keep thee from Christ. Love Him—trust Him—follow Him—serve Him. To whom wouldst thou give thy heart, if not to Him who first gave Himself for thee?

Ver. 8. "*O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*" The weary pilgrim is at length before God in Zion. Blessed journey that has such an end! And blessed be the God of Jacob, that the pilgrim has now and then, even on the journey, sweet foretastes of that happy end; but, oh

what will it be when it is fully tasted in glory—in the Father's house on high! Till then, O my soul, fail not to drink at the fountain, though travelling through a dry and thirsty land. Faith is as welcome now in those courts above, as thou thyself wilt be at the journey's end. Thy title is as good now as it will be then; the name of Christ can never be more welcome than it is to-day. Oh, then, use thy title now; let heaven see what great and constant use thou canst make of that blessed name now.

In musing on these words, a solemn thought crosses the mind: Zion, or grace, is the meeting-place of God and His people. Every child of Adam, sooner or later, must meet God on one of two grounds,—the ground of *righteousness*, or the ground of *grace*. No one can escape, or pass unnoticed in a crowd. Each one must, individually and for himself, appear before God. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. xiv. 12.) Most solemn thought, surely! But if on the ground of righteousness, all must be lost—for ever lost. Who could answer to God for one of a thousand of his many thousand sins? Hence the psalmist prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) Human reasoning would not avail there. But no man, even now, ever reasons in the presence of God. Clearly then, on the ground of righteousness, the soul must be hopelessly lost. God grant that my dear reader, through faith in Christ, may pass from death unto life now, and so never come into judgment. John v. 24.

Grace, pure grace, is the only other ground. There

is no middle ground in Scripture. And he who stands before God on this ground is safe for ever. He is saved with God's great salvation. What he previously was is not thought of. He is now a true believer in Christ Jesus. He honours the Saviour with the confidence of his heart; and, in God's sight, there is nothing too good for him. He honours him in the fullest and most public way. In short, he is blessed according to the riches of Divine grace, and the value of the work of Christ. He fares well, yes as well as Christ Himself! As the bride ranks with the bridegroom, as the wife ranks with the husband, so does the Christian rank with Christ in heaven. He is joined unto the Lord, and one spirit with Him. Happy they who are thus done with their own works, and trust only in the finished work of Christ. But tell me, O my soul, in plain terms, what is the difference to-day between a soul that is on the ground of grace and one that is on the ground of righteousness? Practically, the one trusts in Christ, the other trusts in himself. This is the great difference, really, between the saved and the unsaved—the Christian and the worldling. It is connection by faith with the person of Christ that makes the difference. The one may be as full of outward religious observances as the other; but, unless the heart be connected with the person of Christ, these go for nothing. Were a school-boy to cover his slate with ciphers, not one of them could be reckoned, until he had connected them with a figure; then they would all count. Even so, a cup of cold water, given in connection with the name of Christ, shall have its eternal reward.

He who has felt his need and helplessness, and trusts in Christ alone, is on the ground of the pure favour of God; but he who is still a stranger to this state, however full of good works, charities, and religious duties, is on the ground of inflexible righteousness. The tree must first be made good, before the fruit can be good. We must be engrafted into the living Vine, and drink of the fatness of its roots, before we can bear fruit to God. Christ only can bear fruit to God; but as the tree bears fruit through its branches, so Christ bears fruit to God through His members.

Awful, indeed, must be the meeting between God and the sinner on the ground of righteousness. When the plumb-line is laid to a crooked wall, it does not make it straight, but it shows out all its crookedness. The judgment-seat will prove the sinner's condition, but it can show him no favour. The day of grace is past. It is too late to cry for mercy—yes, alas! Too late when the sentence, "Depart from me" is uttered—too late when the gates of heaven are closed—too late when the gates of hell are opened—too late when Satan, whom he has served, claims him as his—too late when enclosed within those fiery walls whence none ever escape! Oh what an end for an immortal soul! The very thought of it is overwhelming. The soul shudders in writing it. Oh what can be done now to prevent it? is the first feeling of the heart. And yet, what can we say? The only thing that can prevent it is done already. Redemption is accomplished. Jesus died and rose again. The sure foundation of grace and

glory has been laid in Zion, and whosoever believeth shall never be confounded. "Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," are plain words; who can misunderstand their meaning? The jailer believed on the Lord Jesus Christ—he trusted in Him according to the word of the apostle, and was saved, and others of his household who believed. The gospel is the same to-day as it was then; whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.

Lord of the harvest, send more labourers into the gospel field; and grant, Lord, that Thy preachers may never lose sight of the solemn results of their preaching! Surely, if preachers themselves were more alive to the awful future of a Christless soul, they would be more in earnest, and more would be awakened by their warning voice. The end is near, the time is short, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and souls—many souls—are perishing.

Let Thy word, O Lord, be clothed with power from on high, that it may be more effectual in them that hear it; and fill Thine evangelists, blessed Lord, with a burning desire—a consuming passion—for the salvation of sinners. With the fearful end of their unawakened hearers in view, may they speak plainly, pointedly, boldly, earnestly, and affectionately; and may their constant prayer be, "Lord, suffer not even one precious soul to depart unimpressed, unawakened, unsaved."

"Oh speak of Jesus—of His grace,
Receiving, pardoning, blessing all;

His holy, spotless life to trace—

His words, His miracles recall :

The words He spoke, the truths He taught,
With life, eternal life, are fraught.

“ Oh speak of Jesus—of His death :

For sinners such as we He died.

‘ Tis finished,’ with His latest breath

The Lord, Jehovah Jesus, cried :

That death of shame and agony
Opened the way of life to me.”

While meditating on the happiness of those who had reached mount Zion, and were before God in His holy temple, the psalmist breaks forth in fervent prayer and praise. He was longing to enjoy the same privileges himself. “ My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.” How often this has been the experience of the people of God, when deprived of the public means of grace so called. There is Divine reality in the fellowship of saints. “ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” There is spiritual refreshment and blessing in meeting with those we love in the spirit. Ere long we shall meet in heaven, to part no more, and to love each other perfectly.

The mere formalist, of course, knows nothing of these exercises ; but the psalmist was the opposite of a formalist. His whole heart was in the temple-worship of God ; and he enters into it in spirit, though perhaps in exile. He praises God ; but, owing to his position, his praise turns into prayer. “ O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob.”

There are two distinct thoughts, of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of *Divine majesty*, and the consciousness of *Divine relationship*. As "Lord of hosts," He is almighty in power; as the "God of Jacob," He is infinite in mercy and goodness to His people. The Jew could depend on the covenant-faithfulness of Jehovah; *we*, on the name of "Father," in connection with Christ. There was power to protect in the valley of Baca; and, sweeter still, grace to bless on the holy hill of Zion. It is there the happy worshipper loses sight of self, and of all the troubles and trials of the way, and rejoices in the blessed consciousness of his relationship with the living God.

As Christians, we have "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." We are thus taught and led by the Holy Ghost Himself, to use the sweet expression of our relationship—Father. This is our happy place *now*, through the riches of sovereign grace. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) Only yesterday, as it were, we were far off from God, and seeking happiness apart from Him; but He has had mercy—great mercy, blessed be His name—and brought us to Himself through faith in Christ Jesus. And now the children's place and the children's portion are ours—ours to-day—ours henceforth and for ever. Only think, O my soul, on that wondrous word, which has gladdened so many hearts: "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Meditate, I

say, on this great truth—on these very words—“*no more.*” “*Thou art no more a servant, but a son,*” and “*an heir*”—“*an heir of God.*” Not merely, observe, an heir of heaven, or of glory, but “*an heir of God through Christ.*” Oh wondrous truth! The possessions of God are thine. And mark, too, I pray thee, that the Spirit is not speaking here of what we *shall* be, but of what we *now* are. “*Thou art no more a servant, but a son.*” Marvellous place! blessed privilege! glorious liberty! We can only worship and adore; nothing can be added to our possessions. His name alone have all the praise and glory. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure.” 1 John iii. 1—3.

“Once as prodigals we wandered,
 In our folly, far from Thee;
 But Thy grace, o’er sin abounding,
 Rescued us from misery.
 Thou the prodigal hast pardoned,
 ‘Kissed us’ with a Father’s love,
 ‘Killed the fatted calf,’ and called us
 E’er to dwell with Thee above.

“Clothed in garments of salvation,
 At Thy table is our place;
 We rejoice, and Thou rejoicest,
 In the riches of Thy grace.

‘ It is meet,’ we hear Thee saying,
 ‘ We should merry be and glad :
 I have found my once lost children ;
 Now they live who once were dead.’ ”

Ver. 9. “ *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.* ” What marvellous words are these ! In writing them down they have touched a chord in the heart, which awakens deep thoughts and feelings. The combination is beautiful and blessed—“ our Shield ”—“ Thine Anointed.” God and the soul are brought near to each other. Their object, their centre, is one—“ our ”—“ thine.” Both are looking to the same Christ, though from different points of view. He is God’s Anointed, He is thy Shield, O my soul ! Dwell on this blessed theme. Precious Saviour ! He glorifies God—reconciles the sinner, and unites both in Himself. “ I in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John xiv. 20.) Blessed union—fruitful in eternal *unity* and glory !

Never before, O my soul, hast thou so seen or felt the power of this verse ; and now, happily, patiently, deeply, meditate thereon, I pray thee ; while the fire burns, concentrate thy musings on this great truth. Think on the many blessings which flow from thy privileged place. All favour, all security, all happiness, both for time and eternity, are found therein.

But especially would I say, Meditate on Him who thus links every believer with God, and the valley of Baca with the courts above. He who is the Father’s delight—the One on whom He ever looks with perfect complacency, is every believer’s hiding-place—is *thy* hiding place. There thou art sheltered from

every storm in this life ; and there, too, as behind an invulnerable shield, thou art safe for ever. No enemy can ever break through thy sure defence. They may threaten, but can do no more. Only watch thou, and never wander from thy hiding-place. Thy only security is to keep behind the shield. Thou hast all there.

“ What in Thy love possess I not ?

My star by night, my sun by day,
My spring of life when parched with drought :
My wine to cheer, my bread to stay,
My strength, my shield, my safe abode,
My robe before the throne of God ! ”

While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ Himself. It is the knowledge of His Person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, “ Look upon the face of thine anointed.” We cannot always say, *Look on us* ; but we may always say, *Look on Him*. In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to His name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with Him—ever occupied with Him as risen from the dead and exalted to His own right hand in heaven ; and He would have us also to be occupied with Him as the heart’s exclusive object.

True faith can only rest on *God’s estimate* of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the

ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in Himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality. The one rests in God's estimate of Christ, the other in his own. The one trusts in Christ, the other trusts in himself. But oh, how wide the difference between the two in God's sight! and, alas, how wide will be the difference for ever, if no change takes place! As to thyself, dear reader, on what is thy faith, thy hope, resting? See, I beseech thee, that the word of the living God is the solid rock on which all thy expectations are built; and as one lost and ruined under sin, see that thou art looking to Jesus as thy Saviour, and resting on the word of His grace. This is saving faith. It listens only to God.

Take an example—It is on God's testimony to the *blood* of Christ that the *conscience* rests with a perfect rest, in spite of all that it feels working within; and it is only His testimony to the *Person* of Christ that keeps the *heart* peaceful and happy in spite of all circumstances. What God says must hold good and true, independently of all perplexing circumstances without, and of all contrary feelings within. Thus faith argues, and argues fairly, and walks in fellowship with God. When He proclaims from heaven, "This is my beloved *Son*, in whom I am well pleased," the voice of faith from earth responds, "This is my beloved *Saviour*, in whom I am well pleased." The voices meet and agree in One. This is communion! Oh wondrous, gracious, glorious truth! The Lord's name alone have all the praise!

Yet one look more at this precious ninth verse,

before passing on to the tenth. The thoughts love to linger over the many lines of truth which it suggests. It begets meditation. And still the leading thought is—God looks for the believer to have the same thoughts of Christ, as He has Himself. But this is the work of the Holy Spirit. We only know Christ in the proportion that He is revealed unto us by the Spirit. Hence the unspeakable importance of understanding the Scriptures on this point; and of giving the Holy Spirit His right place both in our hearts and ways. “For he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John xiv. 17.) When this leading truth of the present period is either overlooked or practically displaced, there must be great darkness and feebleness as to the Person of Christ. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” 1 Cor. xii. 3; ii. 11. John xvi. 13, 14.

The great object, we believe, of the Holy Spirit's work in us, is to make good in our hearts the thoughts of God concerning Christ. This is the basis of the Christian's walking in the light as God is in the light, and of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. Indeed, all hinges, practically, on this

state of soul. Our consistency, spirituality, steadfastness, devotedness, and happiness, are intimately connected with it. When the heart is right with Christ, both the judgment and the practice will be right. The affections govern the judgment. God's way of delivering souls from all evil, both inwardly and outwardly, is Christ. Our only strength is in being filled with Him. Light on the path, and strength to walk therein, flow from this.

Is it not ignorance of Christ that leads the unconverted around us to act so contrary to Him? And on the other hand, is it not the knowledge of Christ that leads to a life of holiness and practical godliness? And just in proportion as the Christian enjoys Christ, does he live above self and the world. And further, it is only in being occupied with Christ, as He is before God, in all His loveliness, that we grow up into His likeness. This is the principle: If we would love Him more, we must be more occupied with His love to us; if we would serve Him better, we must be more occupied with His devotedness to us; if we would get rid of our spiritual deformities, we must be more occupied with His loveliness. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18.

But alas! how often it happens, that even true, earnest Christians are strangers to this line of truth, this character of exercise, and this fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is a constant tendency in such to be occupied with a

sense of inward evil in place of Christ; consequently, darkness, feebleness, a lack of communion as to Christ, must be the result. Discouraged and cast down from what takes place within, they are filled with doubts and fears. They think the heart ought to get better, and not have so many bad thoughts as it once had. Most true, the Christian has to judge himself daily and hourly for everything that is contrary to Christ. But he has also another lesson to learn; namely, he has to learn to distinguish between what flows from Christ, and what flows from himself. There is no good thing in nature, and no good thing can ever come from it. "In me," says the great apostle "(that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." Every good thing cometh down from above. But we are slow to learn that there is nothing good towards God in our nature, and that nothing good in His sight can ever come from it.

We must live *Christ* if we would please God, and walk in fellowship with Him; but we must first *learn Him*. He is our lesson. Oh! that we could impress all our readers, and ourselves, more deeply, with the importance of this great truth! "To learn Christ—and to live Christ." "For me to live is Christ," says the apostle; and in writing to the Ephesians, he says, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." This is our lesson,—the wide range of truth, as brought out and set in the light of heaven, in connection with the lowly Jesus on earth, and the exalted Christ in heaven. This, I repeat, is our lesson! He is the way, the truth, and the life.

The character, the reality, the truth, of everything was tested by His presence on earth. All truth meets in His Person. But most and best of all, by Him we know God and are happy: and in Him as the risen, exalted, and glorified Christ, we know, and still learn more and more of our privileges and blessings in the presence of God. "*Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*"

"When the hours of day are closing,
And the sun has reached the west,
Sweetly in Thy love reposing,
I would lay me on Thy breast.
Jesus Lord, I thirst for Thee,
Thou art all in all to me.

"Thou hast taught me of the union
Of my new-born soul with Thee,
And in hours of deep communion
Thou hast spoken, Lord, to me.
Jesus, *now* I thirst for Thee,
Thou art all in all to me."

Ver. 10. "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" Those who only know the pleasures of the tents of wickedness, can have no proper conception of the true, solid, lasting pleasures of the courts of the Lord. Those who know both can speak positively of the difference. Who that has spent a day with God in spirit, and in the varying exercises of meditation and devotion, cannot speak of its blessedness? But the testimony of Scripture on the subject is full, and safer to judge from.

The Spirit of truth, by Solomon, has said, "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity." (Eccles. vii. 6.) Noisy, empty, sparkling, it may be, for a moment, and then extinguished for ever. Such, alas! is the character of the so-called pleasure in the tents of wickedness. But what shall we say of the fearful condition of those who are feeling the sharp sting of sin after the pleasure is gone? Is it not misery—great misery, even in this life? But, oh! what must it be when all its bitterness is felt in the place where hope never enters! The remembrance of those shallow, short-lived pleasures of earth will afford no relief there.

But we turn to the other and brighter side of the question, and there we read of something very different—may this be the happy portion of all who read these lines! "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 11.) Which *now*, dear reader, may I ask, do you prefer? Ecclesiastes vii. 6 is as true as Psalm xvi. 11. But the path of life in the latter, and the path of folly in the former, are as wide apart as heaven and hell. Which, think you, my dear reader, is the nobler, higher, manlier, worthier, wiser path? The boisterous, hollow, unmeaning mirth of the worldling, or the calm, real, lasting joy of the Christian? Do you hesitate? Need you hesitate? The Lord enable you to choose the better part—the *part that shall never be taken from you*. This itself is no small comfort to the believer. "Mary hath chosen that good part *which shall not be taken away from her*." (Luke

x. 42.) We may not always enjoy or value the good part as we ought to do, but it shall not be taken away from us. God says it, and that is enough to faith.

Besides, the same blessed truth is plainly taught in our text: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." What a wonderful place and portion we have here! The Lord's name be praised. What a field for meditation! Enter it, my soul, I pray thee; come and meditate with spiritual power on these wonderful words, "Thy right hand"—the place of dignity, power, and special privilege. "Fulness of joy"—nothing lacking; "all spiritual blessings." "Pleasures for evermore." Not only is it the place of honour and joy, but it is our everlasting place—"for evermore." "Pleasures for evermore." No alloy, no fear of these pleasures ever coming to an end—they are "for evermore."

Better, surely, better far, be in the humblest condition as to this life, with the knowledge of Jesus, than be the greatest and most exalted monarch that ever sat upon a throne, without the knowledge of Jesus. From the lowest ranks in this life faith aspires to the highest enjoyments in heaven. It is high-born, high-souled, high in its aspirations, and high in its destinies. It affirms that *one day*—a *single day*, spent in the house of God, is better far, than a thousand spent in the tents of wickedness. And if it be so now, oh, what must it be hereafter! Then the faithful in Christ Jesus shall ascend to the house of many mansions, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. But alas, alas, those who preferred the tents of wickedness to the com-

pany of the godly during their earthly days, can have no part or lot with them, in those abodes of unmingled, never-ending blessedness. May the Lord in His rich grace, prevent such a fearful end in the case of *all* who read these meditations! And to His name alone be all the praise and glory.

“The Lamb is there, my soul—
There God Himself doth rest,
In love Divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.

“God and the Lamb—’tis well,
I know that source Divine
Of joy and love no tongue can tell,
Yet know that all is mine.”

Ver. 11, 12. “*For the Lord God is a sun and a shield : the Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*” We have now come to the close of our beautiful and instructive Psalm. Precious indeed, and most practical, are the many lines of truth which it has suggested for meditation. The Lord in His mercy grant that they may neither be overlooked nor forgotten. Under the head of “tabernacles,” we have dwelt on the usual occupations of a Lord’s-day, and on the mixed multitudes that throng the various places of worship. The attractions of the world, the dangers of delay in the concerns of the soul, the full gospel, the blessedness of the saved, and the misery of the lost, have also been before us. Oh! that what has been written may be the means of blessing to many, but especially

to many mere formal, Christless professors, and to many poor careless sinners. The Lord knows how much they have both been on the writer's heart through it all. May all who have read, or who may yet read, these pages, be brought to Jesus, and blessed with God's great salvation!

We also pray, that the Lord may bless these meditations abundantly, to many of His dear pilgrim saints who are now passing through the valley of Baca. Young Christians just entering on their heavenly way have been especially thought of. The Lord in His tender love and care watch over them, keep them, and bless them. The offence of the cross has not yet ceased. But, the Lord be praised, there are still wells in Baca, and a glorious Zion in prospect. May the faith, hope, patience, and courage of Thy beloved ones, most gracious Lord, be kept strong in Thyself, until they have passed the vale of tears, and safely reached the Mount Zion of Thy love and glory!

Like our former TWENTY-THIRD Psalm of sweetest and most cherished remembrance, the EIGHTY-FOURTH closes in heavenly brightness. In the Twenty-third, the believer ends his journey amidst the grateful recollections of the past, the peaceful joys of the present, and the blessed assurance of a glorious future. The heart overflowing with gladness, and surrounded with mercies, the worn and weary pilgrim leaves the valley and enters his Father's house—the home of never-ending love. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Thus

winds up what has been often called—the children's psalm.

In like manner, we may say, concludes the Eighty-fourth. Amidst the light and glory, the strength and beauty, and the unmeasured goodness of God, the scene closes. And thus, O my soul, observe it well, ends every believer's earthly days. Death is no longer the *master*, but the *servant* of the believer—a messenger of peace. All may not know the truth alike, or enjoy it alike, but it is alike true to all. Our unbelief changes not the faithfulness of God. He changeth not, blessed be His name. The Lord God Himself is the pilgrim's sun and shield. As He said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv.). What had Abram to fear? we may ask; what could Abram lack, when behind such a shield, and enjoying such a reward? Meditate, again, I pray thee, O my soul, on these wondrous words. They are directly applicable to thyself. Thou art, in virtue of thy union with Christ in heaven, a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth.

But the great truth for the heart is, not merely the thought of having "a sun and shield" as our light and protection in this world, but rather, *who* the sun and shield is. Not, observe, *what*, but *who*, the sun and shield is. *The Lord God is thy sun and shield!* Blessed truth! It meets the whole need of the heart. There is no sunshine like the beams of His countenance, and no shelter like the shadow of His wing. Treasure in thy heart this blessed truth—meditate thereon—make it thine own. And still dwell upon

it, until it has become a part of thyself. Bask, as it were, in the sunshine, and repose behind the shield of thy God and Father. All must be peace, and rest, and light, and joy, and security there. No harm can ever come to thee there. It is thy Father's shield. It is well to be always in the shade as to this world, but ever in the sunshine of thy Father's face. While here below amidst all the weakness and darkness of this present scene, forget not that the Lord thy God is thy sun and shield—thy light and guidance in darkness—thy strength and protection in weakness. Thus shalt thou be effectually delivered from all doubts and fears, and filled with the full assurance of faith.

Experimentally, may I ask, my dear Christian reader, dost thou feel thy heart expand, and willingly open out all its folds to the gracious light of this genial sun? It invites thy fullest confidence. It will warm and enlighten, but not consume. Suffer not a dark corner to remain concealed from its searching yet cheering beams. It is fitted and intended to make thee perfectly happy. If one dark spot could remain on thy soul in heaven, it would be no heaven to thee.

But not one moment of thy history shall be left in the dark when thou art manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. There, every moment, and all that belongs to each moment, shall be revealed in the pure light of heaven. *Then* thy happiness shall be complete—thy blessedness unmingled—thy song of praise on the highest key-note of heaven. All will then be fully out between the Lord and thyself. And

all that has been contrary to Him in thy ways shall perish from thy remembrance and from His; and all that has been done for Him shall be graciously acknowledged and rewarded. Even a cup of cold water given to one of the least of His disciples in His name shall be remembered and rewarded for ever. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. To walk *uprightly*, is to walk *before* Him, *by* Him, and *for* Him. It is only the believer's *ways* that are examined and estimated before the tribunal of Christ. The believer himself can never come into judgment, Christ having been judged for Him. (John v. 24.). The Lord enable us *now* to walk in the light as He is in the light, that *now* we may be made manifest unto Him. 2 Cor. v. 10—21.

But there are other two words in the verse before us which must be noticed ere we part with our rich and instructive Psalm. And words they are of no mean significance—“*Grace and glory.*” All blessing, both for time and eternity, is folded up in these two words. “The Lord will give *grace and glory.*” Both come from Him, and both are the fruit, or expression, of His love. Some have spoken of *grace* as the bud, and *glory* as the full-blown beauties of the flower. Others have said, that in David and Solomon we have the illustration of both. Grace was exhibited in David, and glory in Solomon. It was grace that raised David from his low estate to the highest honours; and it was the same grace that restored him when he wandered—that comforted him when in sorrow—that sustained him when in conflict, and that kept him safe until he reached his journey's end.

But when grace had done its work in David, glory shines forth in Solomon. Glory was stamped on everything under his reign. His throne, his attendants, every detail of his household, even the whole land of Israel, reflected his glory (see 2 Chron. ix. 1, 12), yet grace shone in all the glory. The two things are inseparable. All the glories of the rose are folded up in the bud. But it is chiefly in this world that grace has to do with us. This marks the great difference between grace and glory.

Grace has to do with us in our weakness, failure, sorrow; and willingly brings the needed strength, restoration, comfort, and holy joy. It is the sweet and needed companion of the days of our humiliation. Oh! what a friend, what a companion, what a portion grace is for a soul in this world; and what an unspeakable blessing to know the grace of God in truth! "*The Lord will give grace and glory.*" Forget not this, O my soul, reckon on *both*; on grace now, on glory hereafter. They can never fail. There is no need they cannot meet, and no enemy they cannot conquer. Like the pilgrim's guardian angels, "Goodness and mercy," in the Twenty-third Psalm, they surround thee on every side. Encircled indeed thou art, whether in Baca's vale, or on Zion's hill, with a heavenly company. In parting with the companion of many a happy hour, carry this thought with thee. It may give strength and courage to thy heart in a time of need. What can be more suitable for a pilgrim's path, than the precious truths which are at once suggested by the beautiful symbols of a "sun and shield"? or by the plain but all-comprehensive

words—"grace and glory"? And, as if these did not sufficiently express the love and care of thy Lord, it is added, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Say, then, O say, my soul, is not this enough? He is unwearied in His love, He is all patience in His ministry, He waits on thee in every step of thy journey. He fills the pools and wells of Baca, to refresh the pilgrim on his way. What truth, oh what truth for the heart—what light for the path—what strength for conflict—what assurance of victory, in His boundless grace!

Suffering first, glory follows. Take courage, my soul. "*A little while,*" and glory will fill the wide, wide regions of thy Lord's dominions. And being *with Him*, thou shalt be at the centre of it all. Conflict ceases there. Here grace has to struggle with our evil in many ways, and sometimes it may seem doubtful which is to win the day; but the Lord gives more grace, and it always triumphs. But there no evil can ever be, either to dispute or divide the scene with glory. Then, the days of evil will be past, and past for ever. Then, the Lord of glory will have everything His own way—He will form and fashion everything after His own mind—He will keep everything under His own hand, and stamp everything with His own glorious image. It will then be *glory, GLOEY, GLORY.*

Oh! blessed, happy, looked-for, longed-for day, come quickly! Oh! what a day that will be—a day of unmingled blessedness—a day of inconceivable joy, in rejoining those who have gone before—in seeing

thee, O most blessed Lord, face to face, and those, *once* known—*well* known and loved on earth! Oh! day of days, second to none, save that first of all days, when Thou didst give Thyself for us—when Thou didst lay the foundation in Thy death of that day of coming glory!

“Loved ones are gone before, whose pilgrim-days are done;
I soon shall greet them on that shore, where partings are unknown.

But more than all, I long His glories to behold,
Whose smile shall fill the radiant throng with ecstasy untold.
That bright, yet tender smile—my sweetest welcome there—
Shall cheer me through the “little while” I tarry for Him here.
Thy love, most gracious Lord, my joy and strength shall be;
Till Thou shalt speak the gladdening word that bids me rise to Thee.”

And now, with mingled feelings, waiting and longing for that better day, I close my Meditations on our beautiful Psalm. May the Lord bless it to every reader as He has done to the writer, and *more* if it be His good will. And may the testimony of the psalmist, in the closing* note of his sacred song, be the assurance of our hearts and the testimony of our lives henceforward and for ever. “O LORD OF HOSTS, BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT TRUSTETH IN THEE.”

“I REST with Thee, Lord; whither should I go?
I feel so blest within Thy home of love.
The blessings purchased by Thy pain and woe,
To Thy poor child Thou sendest from above.
O never let Thy grace depart from me,
So shall I still abide, my Lord, with Thee.

**" I REST with Thee ! eternal life the prize
Thou wilt bestow when faith's good fight is won.
What can earth give, but vain regrets and sighs
To the poor heart whose passing bliss is done ?
For lasting joys I fleeting ones resign,
Since Jesus calls me His, and He is mine.**

**" I REST with Thee ! no other place of rest
Can now attract, no other portion please ;
The soul of heavenly treasure once possess,
All earthly glory with indifference sees.
Poor world, farewell ; thy splendours tempt no more ;
The power of grace I feel, and thine is o'er.**

**" I REST with Thee ! with Thee whose wondrous love
Descends to seek the lost, the fallen raise.
O that my whole of future life might prove
One hallelujah, one glad song of praise !
So shall I sing, as time's last moments flee,
Now and for ever, Lord ; I REST with Thee ! "**



THE DWELLING-PLACE OF GOD.

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM lxxxiv.

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where Thou dost dwell !
For Thine abode my spirit faints and sighs—
The courts I love so well.
My longing soul is weary
Within Thy house to be ;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.

The sparrow, Lord, hath found a sheltered home,
The swallow hath her nest ;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to Thine altars flying,
Would there for ever be ;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for Thee !

How blest are they who in Thy house abide !
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom Thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep Thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on Thine arm ;
And Thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.

From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care :

Thy rain is sent from heaven
 To fertilise the land,
 And wayside grace is given,
 Till they in Zion stand.

Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer !
 O Jacob's God, give ear !
 Behold, O God our Shield, we through Thy care
 Within Thy courts appear :
 Look Thou upon the glory
 Of Thine Anointed's face ;
 In Him we stand before Thee,
 To witness of Thy grace !

One day with Thee excelleth o'er and o'er
 A thousand days apart ;
 In Thine abode, within Thy temple-door,
 Would stand my watchful heart.
 Men tell me of the treasure
 Hid in their tents of sin ;
 I look not there for pleasure,
 Nor choose to enter in.

Own thou the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
 No good will He withhold ;
 He giveth grace, and soon shall be revealed
 His glory, yet untold.
 His mighty name confessing,
 Walk thou at peace, and free ;
 O Lord, how rich the blessing
 Of him who trusts in Thee !

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